October, 1918

The Black Cat

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Clever Short Stories

"THE VAMPIRE"

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Doctor Says Crying Need Of The Woman of Today Is More Iron In Her Blood

TO HELP STRENGTHEN HER NERVES AND PUT COLOR IN HER CHEEKS

Any woman who tires easily, is nervous or irritable, or looks pale, haggard, and worn should at once have her blood examined for iron deficiency. Administration of simple Nuxated Iron will often increase the strength and endurance of weak, nervous, careworn women in two weeks' time and help make them look years younger.

In commenting on the unusual demands being made today of women in every walk of life, Dr. Ferdinand King, New York Physician and Medical Author says: "There can be no healthy, beautiful, rosy cheeked women without iron. I have strongly emphasized the fact that doctors should prescribe more organic iron—Nuxated Iron—for their nervous, run-down, weak, haggard-looking women patients. Pallor means anaemia. The skin of anaemic women is pale, the flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone, the brain fags and the memory fails, and often they become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

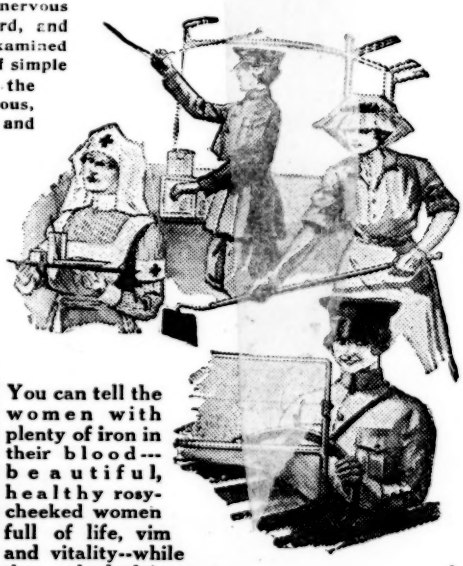
"In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated cornmeal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked, are responsible for another grave iron loss.

"Therefore you should supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt. But avoid the old forms of metallic iron which may injure the teeth and corrode the stomach and thereby do more harm than good. Take only organic iron—Nuxated Iron.

"I have used Nuxated Iron widely in my own practice in most severe aggravated conditions with unfailing results. I have induced many other physicians to give it a trial, all of whom have given me most surprising reports in regard to its great power as a health and strength builder.

"If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak, or run-down, instead of dosing themselves with habit forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages there are probably thousands who might readily build up their red blood corpuscles, increase their physical energy and get themselves into a condition to ward off the millions of disease germs that are almost continually around us. It is surprising how many people suffer from iron deficiency and do not know it."

If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five grain tablets of ordinary Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks, then test your strength again and see how much you have gained.



You can tell the women with plenty of iron in their blood---beautiful, healthy rosy-cheeked women full of life, vim and vitality--while those who lack iron are often cross, nervous, irritable, weak, tired, complaining creatures whom nobody wants to have around.

MANUFACTURERS' NOTE: Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended by Dr. King is not a secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all good druggists and general stores.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Black Cat

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I Am Public Opinion

All men fear me!

I declare that Uncle Sam shall not go to his knees to beg you to buy his bonds. That is no position for a fighting man. But if you have the money to buy and do not buy, I will make this No Man's Land for you!

I will judge you not by an allegiance expressed in mere words.

I will judge you not by your mad cheers as our boys march away to whatever fate may have in store for them.

I will judge you not by the warmth of the tears you shed over the lists of the dead and the injured that come to us from time to time.

I will judge you not by your uncovered head and solemn mien as our maimed in battle return to our shores for loving care.

But, as wise as I am just, I will judge you by the material aid you give to the fighting men who are facing death that you may live and move and have your being in a world made safe.

I warn you—don't talk patriotism over here unless your money is talking victory Over There.

I am public opinion!

As I judge, all men stand or fall!

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THE BLACK CAT

TIGER! TIGER!

By GEORGE GILBERT

The fat man from overseas is a collector of animals, orchids and rare porcelains; but one day he casts his collector's eye upon the bride of a Burmese elephant driver. It is a bad day for all concerned.

IT is well for the foreign-born Chow to rest. The elephants are in their lines for the night among the teak trees on the slope above the camp. It is pleasant here, where the bamboos are not too thick. It is true that the gibbon in the *stick-lac* tree across the Meh Khow will will say on and on:

"Hoop-hoop-oui-oi-oi-oi!"

But then, we have *tay-lay-ows* set at every path leading to the camp and they will stop the Dewas of our Shanland from doing harm to our souls. And, as for tigers, we have lines of vines and coir ropes stretched over every trail, that a tiger, prowling, may feel them breast-high and, suspecting a trap, will retire in peace.

It is, as the High Born says, a night for dreams. See how the great Atlas moths, in bridal flight, appear and go into nothingness, as the fireflies, flashing their lamps on the scene, limn them out, then invite the return of night by letting their lights fail—

Yes, High Born, a night for dreams. Let us, then, talk of all the things that ever were or can be. To-morrow I shall be your *mahout,* and you shall mark out on your talk-paper the way the fire carriages are to go. But to-night—

It was thus, Son of Beneficence:

In the old days, I, Wan Kylah, of the Karen Yain—the wild Karens—worked with my elephant, Ondra Pra, in the teak forests on the water-parting between the Meh Low and Meh Ing. My elephant was stronger then and swifter, but not so wise and steady as she now is. I am, as she is now, more wise and steady than then.

It was the years when the red-coated soldiers first came into Burmah, and timber was being cut on all sides for sale down the rivers for ships, railroads, docks, houses. So it was a time of great toil all through the hills.

Although of the wild Karen, who will not live in fixed villages, yet was I a man of note among the elephant men, for I was skilled not only in handling my own elephant, but in curing all manner of elephant ailments, such as split toe-nails, sore eyes, tender feet and so on. And that won me much fame among my fellows.

We, who worked the teak on the eastern slopes of Loi Mok that year were under the Chow Oom Bana, an over-lord of the Laos. He was tall and thick for a Laos, but a white man might have deemed him small. He was a hard man and a driver, yet we elephant folk feared him not, as we be driven of no man, having always our beasts to rely upon to protect us.

The year was at the best, the bamboos newly leaved, their feathery-topped fronds rustling in the breezes like the silk robes of brides, the bauhinia trees in flower, the Rangoon creepers aflame in the thickets. As my elephant, pacing toward the great temple near the village at the sources of the Meh Hsen, came through the taller trees to the edges of the river plain, a maid, bearing high on her head a *pah* of paddy, stepped from the path-side almost in front of my hastening beast, who was eager to get to the lowlands, that she might browse new bamboo shoots and bathe in the little cold, clear hill stream behind the old temple.

I saw that the maid was of the Karenni, the Karens who live in villages and then paid homage to the Laos, unreserved homage. Her black hair, resting in coiled

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beauty upon her little head: her eyes that seemed like the dusky depths of pools between bamboo clumps in the inner swamps; her body, free-moving under the robe of brown; the little feet, pink and soft as they made fairy prints on the soft earth of the path-side; her skin like ivory that has aged and that had, on her cheeks, the hint of the *pouk* flower's color, ravished me at once. Yet I did not speak—it is not our custom. But I did observe whither she went—up the way toward Maung Vai—

Yes, High Born, I took her to wife. Her name was Mway Prabhang.

"You have keen eyes, to find such a wife in the forest ways," the Chow Oom Bana said to me a moon after I had returned to my place in his timber camp on Loi Mok. "Are you not afraid that while you are distant, here in the hills, some one may take her?"

"It would be ill for that man, oh Chow," I made answer, "to be found afterwards, as, if I and my elephant did not slay him, the *mahouts* or burden bearers of the other elephant folk would. We be terrible men at need, we elephant men."

The Chow Oom Bana smiled his evil smile and waved his hand for my going.

In our bamboo house, behind the temple of Meh Hsen that night I told Mway Prabhang of the chief Chow's words. She placed her rosebud hand over my mouth, saying:

"Let us not think of him, but of our love. He did look at me when he was in our village bargaining for fowls but a week before we met. As lord of our people he had the right to call me before him, but when the call was made, I had gone —into the jungle. Let us forget him for our loves."

A fruit bat chattered in the thatch of our house then, the fireflies blinked their lamps, the wind made the bamboos to talk. And again she placed her rosebud hand over my mouth—

Well, Benefactor, I forgot about the Chow Oom Bana and his lust, yet I did, by promise of a rupee, bind Yang Hana, the *cheelah* of the Buddhist monk who watched at Indra's shrine in the temple to bring me word did anything happen to her. I did not fear an open attack, but there are ways of securing revenge for such an affront as I had put on the Chow Oom Bana, Benefactor—

And now the fat man from over-seas comes into the tale. Up from Zimme he came, bearing palm leaf scrolls bidding all to be at peace with him, to hire him elephants, *mahouts,* supplies of all sorts. Such an order from the Court made even the Chow Oom Bana bow to the fat man, who was a great Chow in his own land, called Von Roon, a collector of animals, orchids, rare porcelains, for all which he paid great prices.

When I came in from the teak forests the night the foreign Chow came to Meh Hsen I found him and his followers encamped all about, in the best places. The Chow Oom Bana called to me:

"Ho, Karen Yain of the Elephants, draw near!"

I brought my ankus lightly against the side of Ondra Pra's head and she turned to face the great ones. I tapped her forehead and gave the word and she knelt for me to alight. I raised my ankus in salute, waited:

"The great foreign Chow would use your elephant, oh Wan Kylah," the Chow Oom Bana said.

I saluted in sign of obedience.

The Chow Von Roon? A mountain of a man, thick, hairy, tall, with pig-eyes and great drooping lower lip, like a baboon's. All in white was he dressed, with a cork hat and down-hanging green scarf behind to keep the sun off his backbone.

"An ape of a man and an evil one," I thought, viewing him.

"You will go, now, toward Maung Hsi," the Chow Oom Bana gave order, "pushing on to reach there before dawn, that you may bring back certain *pahs* of rice—choice rice—that are there for the foreign Chow. Go quickly."

Well, High Born, it was a strange order, as my elephant had done her day's work and the great ones dislike working after they have done their task. Yet, as the Chow Von Roon had orders from the Court that he was to be highly honored

and as the Chow Oom Bana had made the order, on his part, there was nothing to be done. It was to be my first night away from my bride; but then, a man must sleep away from his bride sometime and as it had to come and had come in the line of duty—

Yes, I went, first going to bid Mway Prabhang farewell.

Homing at dusk the next day, something rustled into the forest path as I neared Meh Hsen. It was the *cheelah* Yang Hana.

"Speak!" I commanded, raising my ankus, ready to smite my beast to urge her onward, if need be.

"Thy bride," he panted.

"What of her?"

"Is in the *zana* of Meh Hsen with the fat Chow Von Roon—"

"Thou liest," I raged.

"Remember the rupee thou promised. I lie not—"

I threw him the rupee, smote my elephant cruelly, for the first time, and she sped on. Yet I knew it would not do to appear in Meh Hsen all in haste. I must dissemble.

So, near the village I halted the great one for a space and we entered Meh Hsen late, sedately enough. And I delivered the *pahs* of rice to the headman of the Chow Von Roon—and went my way quietly.

None of the elephant folk spoke to me of the event. I called our leader, Pra Chandra, to me; gave him the use of Ondra Pra' for a certain time and made her to understand it by pounding her toenails on her right forefoot—once for each day I was to be gone.

Then I went. And ere I went far I heard Pra Chandra call after me:

"You do well to go, Wan Kylah."

Only by so much did he or the other elephant folk let me know that they had in mind that for which I went.

Now it was after this manner, Benefactor:

The foreign Chow Von Roon was under the mantle of the Court. Any violence done to him would be done to all my people, an hundredfold, in payment. I could not act openly.

Then, again, what profit is there in suddenly smiting a foe with a kris, a club, an arrow? Vengeance is a dish best eaten cold—

I came to the rest house or *zana* just before the dawn wind stirred the feather-bamboo tops from rest to motion. A line of Court guards were about the great bamboo house, but I crept, like a questing cobra, through the line.

My head against the bamboo stakes forming the outer wall, I listened. Sounds of a gross sleeper came to me and I raged inwardly. Then—

Yes, it was so! Then came to my ears the sound of a little woman's sob.

And he, Von Roon, was a giant and she—but a doll woman, tiny, rose-ivory sweet, a *pouk* blossom—

"Oh, thou Casket of Illimitable Joys that were," I whispered to her when she had heard me pleading for her to come to the wall of the zana, "tell me but one thing: you came not to him; he forced you to be as you are?"

"I have lived through it only to tell you that," she whispered. "I knew you would come. It was thus: The Chow Oom Bana came at eve, on pretense that he wished to leave a word with me for you. He had the foreign Chow. The huge man's eyes devoured me and I was afraid, yet he went away. But, in the night, men came from his party, seized me, wrapped me in my sleeping mat and cast me into the room where I now am and where the Chow Von Roon was. He unbound me, his eye devoured me as with living flame and then he grasped me with his hairy hands. Oh, my lord, I have his knife, that dropped from his belt in his piggish slumber. Thou knowest what I have it for. The Chow Oom Bana to-night came and mocked me, saying: 'You ran from me into the jungle; you mated with an elephant man, despising my offer to take your place amongst my women! Now it is so and thus with you, maiden of the Karenni!' But I have the knife—"

"Endure for yet a time," I pleaded; "I would not ask you unless—"

"Unless you had a reason?"

"Yes, oh Girl of the Honey-Sweet Lips."

"Alas," she mourned, "my lips now are scorched—with hate. It will keep me alive until—"

"Until—"

"You come again."

We could not kiss. We could only touch hands where the stakes were farthest apart.

And I? High Born, I went to the jungle.

The beaters and hunters of the Chow Von Roon from overseas went about, collecting for him. They got him orchids, jungle deer, gem-winged butterflies and moths, Argus pheasants, a panther, a sloth bear, and many, many other things. I, watching on the edges of the village, saw that the guards had been withdrawn from the *zana*, showing they thought I had gone, disheartened, for good. I saw my elephant go to her daily toil with a strange *mahout* on her back. But Mway Prabhang I saw not, yet some village women, in search of bamboo shoots for currie, gossiping near one of my lairs, did tell of a day how my wife had ceased to weep and how the Chow Oom Bana and some woman from his household and the Chow Von Roon and Mway Prabhang made merry with rice wine at night in the *zana*. And they told of how the Chow Von Roon wanted a tiger cub.

That night I went north, past Ban Hai and onto the slopes of Loi Pooay, where I knew some Kha foresters were. To On Pelah, their headman, I made offer:

"Hire to me a dozen of your best hunters, that I may take a tigress for the great foreign Chow at Meh Hsen."

"There is a tigress, with cubs, who has hunted about here these past few nights," he agreed. "The tiger we slew when they first came, as he raided our village and killed an old man. But the tigress has remained. Let us bargain, therefore, for the hire of the hunters."

Well, High Born, it was three days ere the Kha hunters had the pit dug and then we had to leave it a few other days to let the man-scent go from it.

And then?

In a great tree over the pit I watched—alone. The pigling in the pit's belly squealed most enticingly. The Kha hunters had gone to their village, I agreeing that if a tiger came to the pit I would give the alarm.

You may be sure, Benefactor, that I did not sleep. Aloft, over the pit, I fingered the long, noosed rope that I had wrapt about my middle, under my robes.

And fortune was with me, for no sooner had the jungle stilled, except for the pigling's squeals, than I began to hear the "pad, pad, pad" of a tiger's feet and the "pweet, pweet, pweet," that a tiger makes, by contracting its throat muscles, when near to its spring for prey. The moon made all plain below.

Indra's Bride! How beautiful she looked, my tigress, as she sprang to kill the pigling. And how she roared as, landing on the cover of the pit, she crashed through the limbs and sods and palm branches!

I waited until she had stopped thrashing about and the pig had ceased its death squeals. Then I could hear noises like cats calling to each other and the two cubs came, sniffing about the edges of the pit. And she, inside, growled to them to keep back. I, angling with my noose, soon had the two cubs helpless. Then, knowing that the tigress could not emerge from the pit, I went down the tree, caught the spitting cubs, which bit and clawed me well, and thrust them into a huge bag I had brought.

Mark of Siva's Third Eye! How the tigress—my tigress—roared. I glanced at her, slender and striped, terrible in her anger, as she turned her baleful, green-gold eyes up at me. By now fireflies had thronged into the pit, attracted by the smell of new earth that always draws them on. And their glow lighted up the pit almost like the sun's rays. The tigress began to claw at the sides of the pit, casting down the dirt in great clods. I saw that, lacking the tight cover we had made, ready to place over the pit to prevent her digging out, she would make room for the play of her great muscles soon and so be able to spring out. All that I had calculated for in making my plan.

Well, Benefactor, with the tiger cubs thrown across my back, with the tigress clawing at the pit-mouth behind me, I set out for Meh Hsen, a night's journey from the trap. Here and there, as I went, I

set the bag on the ground. After I had gone half way I could *feel*, from the actions of the cubs, that the tigress was on our track.

High Born, I came to the *zana* of Meh Hsen just before false dawn. No guards were on duty. At the bamboo wall I whispered, the tiger cubs mewing in the bag.

Yes, Mway Prabhang made answer, at my first call:

"Ah, Wan Kylah, it has been long, so long. Shall I use the knife now?"

"Not now," I crooned, soothing her as best I could; "Who is in the *zana?*"

"The fat foreign Chow Von Roon, the Chow Oom Bana and his woman. She told me to-night that she, hearing the Chow Oom Bana desired me but lost me to you, and fearing lest the Chow Oom Bana take me, after slaying you, put it into the Chow Oom's heart to deliver me to the hairy-handed foreigner. They all sleep heavily, from the fumes of wine."

"Is there a loose stake in the wall?"

"Yes, but I would not use it for flight till you came."

"Show it me."

I found it, wrenched it out and two others. Then I went in, laid the bag with the cubs in it on the floor a moment, then came out softly. Mway Prabhang I took with me to a tree nearby that I had picked. Aloft we waited, the cubs, in the bag, dangling below at a rope's end, the one I loved tied to the limb on which we sat. The cubs were not whimpering, as now and again I sent forth the snake hiss that frightens all animals, and their young especially, into watchful silence. We could see the *zana* and the path by which I had approached it and over which the tigress would come—

How glorious she was, my tigress, Benefactor, as she flashed into view! She was running the scent breast-high. She paused not a moment, but kept to the track, came to the *zana*, eyed it, crouched, her eyes blazing in the half-light just before dawn. She had no fear of men, with the scent of her cubs so plain before her nostrils. No one was astir, save a pariah dog that fled, howling.

My tigress crept, inch by fatal inch, toward the hole I made in the *zana* wall. At the hole's rim she paused—then—leaped inside—

I could feel Mway Prabhang shiver beside me as the roars of conflict came to us.

Brahma's heart! How the three who were being rended screamed.

Mway Prabhang, hearing the death-cries, shivered again.

I turned to her. She was smiling. She kissed me bravely. Then, as I kissed her, I could feel her clutch at her bosom as she murmured: "I—have—used—the knife!"

It was so! With Von Roon's knife she had slain herself. The rope kept her from falling.

The village now began to rouse. I loosened the rope, letting the cubs fall to the tree's foot. As they struck they began to snarl and the people, as a fresh roaring came from within the *zana*, began to cry out:

"Tiger, Tiger, Tiger!"

"Tiger!"

"T-I-G-E-R!"

The cubs called—and then the whirlwinds of death-sounds in the *zana* ceased and she, my tigress, came forth, with a bound, to them. One stroke of her razor-like claws ripped the bag apart and the cubs came tumbling out, mewing, spitting at their mother. Snarling a mother-call to them, she leaped aside, into the jungle.

Why did I give her back her babes? Because I felt too many pangs of heart anguish not to feel her sorrow over the seeming loss of her babes.

And then the people of Meh Hsen came swarming out, very brave, now that the tigress had gone. And I, sliding down the tree-trunk unobserved, mingled with the crowds and like them, gaped into the hole where my tigress had entered the *zana*—

What did we see? No, Benefactor, there were not three dead people there; just pieces of— Ah-h-h-h! How sweet does the corpse of a dead foe smell!

I buried my Karenni girl that night, went back to my elephant.

"You do well to return," Pra Chandra said to me.

And that was all.

A PRIMADON OF THE PIGS

By CHART PITT

Butterfly Tom and Clarence join the church at Bull Pine Corners. Virtue as its own reward doesn't interest Clarence when there is any cash in sight, and sometimes he is inclined to count his money before the ink is dry.

THE spring Sabbath was drawing to a peaceful close, when Butterfly Tom and his long legged son came limping down the dusty road, looking for a "job of work"—and a square meal in some farmer's kitchen. The warm weather had transformed the Seattle tide flats into steaming pest-pools, poisoning the clams upon which these two strange creatures had subsisted. In the desperation of hunger they had turned their faces toward the country, willing to enslave their rusty muscles for the privilege of putting their feet under some rancher's table.

It was in the slack season between seed time and harvest, and an all-day's tramp had only served to sharpen their hunger.

The shadows of night gathered about them as they shuffled along the dusty road. A warm wind came dancing down across the well-tilled farms, and brought the soft, illusive perfume of apple orchards, and the tantalizing breath of frying bacon.

Butterfly Tom sniffed the air, as a hungry hound-dog might, then turned his head away in the dumb resignation of defeat.

"I just got to have something to eat," Clarence moaned.

"It does seem kind of hard going hungry on Sunday," Butterfly Tom admitted in a voice that flowed at the dead level of despair.

Out across the purple twilight a church-bell sounded its silvery summons. A light blinked out at them from far down the winding road.

"You'll have to hurry faster, or they'll be gone before we get there," Clarence urged.

The dust rose in a cloud about them as they staggered forward in a new burst of speed. Tom's feet dragged like leaden weights, and every muscle in his lean body ached from the day's tramp. A pig went squealing away into the darkness as they turned into the farmyard.

"We're looking for work," Butterfly explained to the woman who came to the door in response to their knock.

"And something to eat," the boy added as he sniffed the air.

For the last hour the old hillman had forced himself forward, knowing that he would be helpless if he paused to rest. Now he felt the stupor of exhaustion creeping over him. Like a drunken man he reeled toward a chair and collapsed. The room seemed filled with a soft blue haze, in which moving forms swayed back and forth in front of his half blinded eyes. He heard the rattle of dishes, and a cup of coffee was pressed to his lips. The hot beverage filled him with a new life; and with it came the old, old pride, that was a part of the very fabric of Butterfly Tom's soul. He pulled himself together and faced the farmer across the table.

"Do I get a job?" he demanded. "I don't reckon on being a beggar."

The woman wiped her eyes with a corner of her apron, and became very busy at the range.

"It's in the slack season," the man evaded. "Think you could work with hogs?"

"I'll do anything that's honest—and has got eating attached to it," Butterfly said.

A few minutes later the two dusty men from the road moved up to the table, and made a trench raid upon the first real food they had seen for months.

"Perhaps they could help with the singing over at the church," the little woman suggested wistfully.

"Singing—well I should say. I earned fifty cents once, singing at a beef round-up over in the Idaho hills," Clarence boasted as he swallowed violently to clear his throat. Then he broke into a rollicking bit of song, that was as old as the cow camps themselves.

"With my foot in the stirrup
And my hand on the horn—
I'm the best little cowboy
That ever was born;
With a ti-yi-yippy-yippy-ya-ya-ya,
A ti-yi-yippy-yippy-ya."

The boy's voice was as wild and crude as the life of which he sang. But there was something in it that appealed.

"That isn't just exactly gospel music," the farmer smiled. "But I guess you could learn. You see our church has lost a lot of members lately. They're all moving over to Sage Bush, where the new railroad is building a town-site. It's level over there, and they're putting in their switch-yards. Guess we won't even get a depot.

"We're only six members—and Oscar Johnson and his wife are leaving to-morrow—and I promised him I wouldn't let the church get any smaller. We just got to have somebody to take their places and help with the singing. I suppose you wouldn't mind joining up with us for the summer. It's the Free Church. As long as you lead an honest life and keep the Sabbath, we don't quarrel about your private opinions."

Thus Butterfly Tom and the long legged boy became a part of the Peterson hog ranch—and the Free Church of Bull Pine Corners; and in spite of the miles they had covered that day, they crowded their lame legs into the farmer's car and attended the evening services.

Mr. Peterson read the text, and spoke, with fervent if mixed metaphor. Never had strangers been given a warmer welcome. The two men from the hills took their part in the singing. In fact Clarence lifted his voice till it smothered the droning notes of the little chapel organ.

It seemed to be fated that the Free Church of Bull Pine Corners, which stood upon the only speck of level ground among those rolling hillsides, must always remain with a membership of only six persons.

In the business meeting that followed the regular services, two new names were added to the roll, and two dropped: the Johnsons taking withdrawal cards for the new church over in Sage Bush.

Butterfly Tom drew no plums in the new official adjustment. But Clarence was named as choir-leader. Hans Swensen and his spouse took over the trusteeships left vacant by the removal of the Johnsons. Peterson remained the reader, and his wife still presided over the little chapel organ.

The days that followed upon the hog-infested hills of the Peterson ranch were a thing of song—and then some more song. Clarence was living up to his reputation as choir-leader of the Free Church. Through dewy mornings and blistering noons, he warbled his lays to the grunting swine. It was a strange combination, but there was nothing intentionally burlesque or cheap about it. With a natural ear for music, the boy readily became familiar with the sweet droning melodies that Mrs. Peterson played, and his voice was above reproach.

Three plain but robust meals a day were beginning to put flesh upon the lean bodies of the mountain men. Then one day a bombshell exploded in the midst of their epicurean eden. The hog man came plodding up through the yellow swelter of the July noon, and brought trouble with him.

"Swensen is trying to destroy the Free Church," he began breathlessly. "But if we all stick together—we're four against two—"

"Sure we'll stick," Clarence volunteered. Then once more the hog dotted hills rang to the measures of a sacred song.

"It's the railroad," Peterson went on. "They are going to build a station at Bull Pine and want the church property for switch-yards. They are offering five thousand dollars for it—and Swensen wants to take the blood money."

"Oh!" the song ended with a wail upon the boy's lips. "Five thousand dollars," he mumbled thickly as he shuffled off after the straying pigs. Then the hills rang to the stirring measures of that old round-up song.

"With my foot in the stirrup
And my hand on the horn—"

That evening Butterfly Tom sat alone upon the tumbled poles of the hog corral and watched a long, lanky form go sneaking across the fields toward the Swensen farm.

The slow, labored breathing of a distant freight train slipped like a soothing lullaby into the empty bowl of the twilight. A thousand night-voices came up out of the darkness. But the heart of the old mountaineer could find no peace.

Across the distant pastures a skulking coyote set the new night throbbing with his ribald lament. Butterfly Tom's lips tightened into a hard, straight line. That whimpering, cowardly beast out there in the darkness was the incarnate spirit of the little drama he just had witnessed.

The next morning Clarence broached the subject of his night's visit.

"Are you going in for a share of that easy money, Dad?" he demanded. "It's better than eight hundred bones apiece—it'll take a long time to earn that much, day-riding a bunch of bacons."

"You're saying that just to hear yourself talk. You ain't yellow enough to do a thing like that—after the way Peterson has used us," Butterfly bluffed.

"Wouldn't I?" the boy retorted. "You just watch me and see. "It's the eight hundred iron boys and back to the hills for your little Clarence."

"You'd better forget it," the old man advised. "I'm going to stick by the Petersons. It'll be three against three. You can't sell the church without a majority."

"Watch me," Clarence sniffed as he started off down the hill.

"Here, where you going?" Butterfly called after him anxiously.

"I'm quitting. No more bacon factory for me. I got a job of work from Swensen," he grinned back over his shoulder as he strutted off toward the ranch house.

Butterfly Tom stood alone among the grunting, rooting pigs and watched the long legged boy. But the lad never looked back. It seemed that he was passing out of the father's life. The days ahead looked more lean and lonely than ever to him. For in spite of the boy's shortcomings, after all he was his first born son of whom he had expected so much.

Those dreams had been nothing but empty bubbles, but they had been so sweet in the dreaming; and now with the blight of years upon him, the old man hugged them to his hungry heart, and was afraid to give them up. Some day—some day Clarence would turn over a new leaf and be a man.

The next day was Sunday, and the pigs were turned into a fenced pasture where they would need no care, as Peterson was very strict about Sabbath work.

"They are going to try and sell the church in spite of us," the hog man informed them at breakfast that morning. "I've sent for Oscar Johnson to come over from Sage Bush. He always used to do the church business. He knows the law."

Butterfly Tom drove his noisy flock from the night corral and turned them into the Sunday pasture. He hurried back toward home, as it soon would be time for church.

The patter of feet behind him attracted his attention. He turned, and there was a line of pigs stringing clear back to the pasture, each bristly snout bent upon forage.

Once more he swung his long hog whip about the protesting swine and sent them up the hill. He hustled them through the gate, and went to locate the place where they had escaped.

It was easily found. One whole side of the rail-and-post fence was down. The rails had been scattered as though a cyclone had struck it.

Butterfly Tom cast a hopeful glance toward the farmhouse. Reinforcements were needed, and in a hurry. A cloud of dust showed where the hog man was starting for church unaware of his hired man's troubles.

The old mountaineer had prefered to go to church astride one of the farm horses. His long legs always became cramped in the car. Now he would either have to ride herd all day or mend the fence. He cast one last appealing look down the empty road, and began to gather the rails.

The honk of an auto horn grew nearer in the distance, and the Swensen car came

sweeping up with a cloud of dust behind it. Clarence was in the rear seat. They were bound for church.

The auto stopped abreast of where Tom stood, and the dust cloud that followed rolled up over them like the blinding smother of a northern blizzard. When it cleared, the three occupants of the car were staring at him open mouthed.

"Why, Dad," the boy challenged in a hurt voice. "Building fence on Sunday—and you a member of the Free Church."

"Somebody tore it down. I'll have to get you to help me fix it," Butterfly began.

"Who? Me? I'm the choir leader of the Free Church—and I don't never work none on Sunday," the boy mocked amid a burst of derisive laughter. Old Swensen kicked the self-starter, and the auto coughed and spluttered as it picked up speed and rolled away.

Butterfly Tom toiled as never before. He heaved a sigh of relief as he came to the last section of fence. He straightened his bent, aching back for one breath before finishing his task. As he did so, a bright object attracted his attention. He went over and picked it up, and as he did so, a look of helpless despair settled like a mask upon his leathery face. It was the flaming red handkerchief that Clarence always wore around his neck.

It was an hour past church time when the old man crawled into the saddle, but there was anything but a Sabbath calm in his heart as he galloped away toward Bull Pine Corners.

The dust cloud of an approaching auto showed on the crest of the opposite hill, as Butterfly Tom dismounted in front of the church and entered the little building.

Services were over, and a business meeting was in full blast. A vote was being taken, and Swensen stated the motion: "To sell the church property to the S. & E. Railroad Company for the sum of five thousand dollars."

"I vote *no*," Butterfly bellowed, still warm from his ride—and his anger.

"We just expelled you for Sabbath breaking," Clarence leered spitefully. "We're only five now—that makes it a thousand bones apiece."

Tom turned a questioning glance toward Peterson. The old hog man nodded his head in bitter resignation; while three lusty voices shouted, "Aye!" and the motion of sale was duly recorded.

Then the door flew open, and Oscar Johnson stepped into the room. As he did so, Swensen hastily adjourned the meeting and slipped out of the rear door, followed by his spouse. The noisy wheezing of their car told that they had fled at the approach of their old neighbor.

"Gosh, won't the fellows open their eyes when I come riding back to the hills with them thousand iron men in my jeans," Clarence boasted. "And Swensen gave me a horse and saddle as a bonus for putting the job over."

He turned to Butterfly. "I'll tell 'em you've got a job riding day-herd in a bacon factory," he grinned at his father.

"What's all the row about?" Johnson butted into the talk.

"They expelled my hired man and then that left us only five members," the hog man groaned.

"Expelled the *sixth member* did you?" There was a painful smile on the lips of the man who knew the law. "Well, young man, you'd better hurry over and get that horse and saddle from Swensen before he finds out. For the property of the Free Church belongs to the state now. A church without six members is supposed to be defunct. That was why I was anxious about getting somebody to take my place before I left."

"Can't we divide—we're the legal heirs ain't we?" Clarence challenged.

"Heirs nothing—there ain't no heirs to a church. You don't pay no taxes, and that's the State's come-back—they get the property when you go busted."

The long legged boy slunk out of the room, and Butterfly staggered after him. With all his failings, Clarence was his first-born son—and the old hope died hard within him.

"I won't dare to look Peterson in the face again—after what you done," his dead level voice reprimanded the boy. "So I guess it's the long dusty road back to Seattle for us."

A BOOST FOR PERSONALITY

By GORTON VEEDER CARRUTH

The Peter Squibbs, father and son, erase an item from the debit side of personality and add one to the credit side.

ND Ray Tucker," said Peter Squibb musingly, "what became of him? I remember he was going to be a veterinarian at one time."

The proprietor of the little tobacco and stationery store laughed gently as he sat on a high stool and leaned comfortably in his shirt sleeves upon the glass top of the cigar case.

"The last I heard," he said, "Ray Tucker was a movie actor in California and doing well. Remember how he used to take off old Doc Wagner talking to a sick cow? 'Ach! and what the matter was mit the nice bossy?'"

Peter Squibb chuckled and nodded. "Let's see," he went, searching for names. "There was Ed Holbrook. Where is he?"

"Dead. Pneumonia. He married Myrtle Stevenson—you remember her?—and now she's librarian in the public library here. She has a little girl that looks just like she used to."

Peter nodded soberly and was silent for a moment. Then other names came to him as his memory dwelt upon the year he had lived in the village nearly a quarter of a century before.

"Did Sam Rutherford become a lawyer as he planned to?" he asked.

"He did," said Jim Bronson grimly, "and a mighty slick one. He has an office in the county seat and he's picking up real estate all around this part of the country. And Will Burrows is a doctor now just as he wanted to be and has a nice practice over at Three Rivers. Jeanne Talmadge is Mrs. Henry Plimpton now. He's a newcomer; you didn't know him. Let's see—guess that was all in our class wasn't it?"

Peter cleared his throat and spoke with a slight touch of self-consciousness.

"No—there was one other—McCoy, I think his name was, Pat McCoy."

"Oh, yes. Funny I forgot him." Bronson's eyes twinkled and he looked at his visitor humorously. "He lives here still and has a boy that's the spit an' image of himself twenty-five years ago. He's a stone mason, or at least that's what he calls himself. I don't want to live in any house set on his walls, though. Seems to me I remember you had a little trouble with him, didn't you? Kind of got the best of you in a scrap once, didn't he?"

Peter flushed a little. "He licked me," he said simply, "as he did most of us lads. But that was a long time ago, Jim, and we were pretty small boys, weren't we?"

A slight hiatus ensued. Peter broke it by saying:

"Well, I guess I'll buy a few cigars, Jim, if you have any to spare." As he was about to go he added, "Mighty glad I found you again, Jim, and I hope I'll have a chance to meet the rest of the old boys before long."

"Sure," said Bronson heartily, "they'll all be glad to know you're in town again."

As he stepped into the street and turned towards his new home a mile away from the little cluster of stores, Peter Squibb's thoughts were all of that vivid year of his boyhood that he had spent in the suburban village. For only a year his family had tried the experiment of living there and then had moved back to the city. Peter had never been there since until, the head of a family of his own, he had come back a month before in search of a country home. He had found it in a pretty lilac and maple screened cottage on the

edge of the village and there he was now settled with his wife and two children. He was a firm believer in the advantages of a country life over a city life and had always been ambitious to bring up his children in the country. It meant commuting himself but that, he felt, would be more than compensated for by the pleasure he expected to derive from a close association with nature. A press of work in his office had hitherto left him without time to look up those of his boyhood friends who might still be in the village, but that day he had recognized one of them in the proprietor of the tobacco store.

So Ed Holbrook was dead! Too bad. He had been a good-natured, fun-loving boy; and he and Peter had been close friends after a bitter fight, due to Ed's belief that Peter had pinched his pet top. They had found out afterwards who had taken the top—McCoy, the school bully, and he had beaten them both for snitching to Ed's older brother, who forced the return of the stolen goods.

Peter Squibb's pace involuntarily quickened and his hands clenched as his memory brought back the details of that episode. It had always rankled. When he had gone into the little country school, a total stranger, he had had to fight a number of times, as every boy does, in order to determine his social status. But those fights left no ill will and his antagonists subsequently became his friends. With McCoy it had been different. He was the biggest, strongest boy in the school, and all the rest were afraid of him. But the amusement of bullying the others had palled on him from long familiarity with their reactions, and he welcomed the advent of a new boy upon whom to experiment. Peter was a safe subject, too, for he was slight of physique and wholly pacific by disposition, although when forced to it, able to hold his own with boys of his size. He was still small and pacific-looking, the sort of man that in appearance is called inconsequential.

So McCoy had made life miserable for the new boy from the first, and his tyranny had culminated in the fight over the top. But the trouble was, it had not been a fight. Overwhelmed by the utter hopelessness of the odds against him and wishing to minimize his punishment, Peter had offered no resistance when the big, knobby-fisted farmer's son had punched his head. He had flushed with shame many a time since as he thought of it and wished that he had struck back no matter what had happened to him. That was what rankled—his own conduct more than McCoy's. The recollection of his timidity had given him a thousand times the pain that McCoy's fists had. It was a blot on his escutcheon; and there had been no chance to erase it, for soon after the fight his family had moved away. Now as he walked along Peter wished that McCoy had been among those of his old schoolmates who had left their native village.

With that thought Peter was suddenly brought back to the present by the realization that he was being a little childish. He began to chuckle at himself.

"What an old fool I am," he thought, "to let that boyhood scrap fret me this way. Anybody might think I was still twelve years old. No doubt McCoy has grown to be a decent enough fellow and I'll enjoy meeting him."

Peter was humming cheerfully as he opened his front gate. He paused for a moment to admire the lilacs just in their best bloom. As he did so he became aware of sounds of distress proceeding from his house. The voice of his son, Peter Jr., was uplifted in wailing. Between the wails could be heard the sympathetic tones of Mrs. Squibb.

Summoning a judicial frame of mind Peter entered the house, hung up his hat, and advanced in the direction from which the mingled voices came. At the sight of his father Peter Jr. stifled his sobs, although the elder Squibb could not but admit that there was sufficient ground for them. His son had a black and swollen eye, a bruised forehead, a bleeding nose and a missing tooth. Also his clothing was soiled, rumpled and torn. Mrs. Squibb, busy with a sponge, warm water and soothing lotions, exhibited signs of intense indignation.

Shooting a warning glance at his wife,

Peter asked casually: "Been fighting, Son?"

"Y-yes, Father."

"How does the other fellow look?"

"He-he's all right."

"All right, eh? Licked you, did he?"

His son hung his head and nodded. Mr. Squibb shifted his line of attack.

"What started the fight?"

"He said I stole his cap, an' I never saw his old cap, the darn liar!"

"And so he punched you, eh? Seems to have done a thorough job, too. What did you say his name is?"

"I—the fellers call him 'Chicky' McCoy."

Mr. Squibb was startled. "McCoy, eh? Hmm-mm!" he ejaculated. "Well! Well! And why didn't you damage him any?"

His son showed signs of renewed tears. "I—I couldn't, Father. I didn't stand a show. He's a big guy—twice as big as me an' strong's a horse. He can lick every boy in school."

"Did you try to paste him?" Mr. Squibb looked at his son curiously.

The boy grew sulky. "I didn't have a show, I tell you," he said with reddening face. "He'd 'a' killed me."

"Well, well," said Mr. Squibb mildly, "too bad." And to his wife's greatly increased indignation he calmly lit a cigar and went out to stroll in the garden. Nay, more; he even chuckled to himself as he walked.

"Like father, like son," he murmured. "What a coincidence! Then after musing a moment he added, "But we mustn't let the coincidence go any further."

Peter Jr., sore in body and mind, but with his emotions under better control, was not surprised when on the following afternoon his father re-opened the subject of the Squibb-McCoy fight. The boy had sensed his father's disappointment that he could not give a better account of his conduct in the affair and had expected to receive some paternal criticism and exhortation. Consequently he was a little inclined to be defiant.

"Peter," said the elder Squibb agreeably, "let me have a word with you on the matter of the late unpleasantness with Chicky McCoy. In the vast concatenation of events, Peter, things often fall out in a curious way. I learned by a youthful experience almost exactly like your own that it is very undesirable to leave matters as they stand between you and your late antagonist. It's bad for the soul; it's bad psychology. It undermines self-confidence and may exert a subconscious influence toward failure that would be a lifelong handicap. It—"

Mr. Squibb, who had been unconsciously expounding for his own benefit was brought back to his audience by a look of unintelligence such as he disliked to see on the face of a son of his.

"What I'm getting at, Peter, old sport," he said, "is this: I want you to lick this guy McCoy and lick him good and proper."

His son understood now, but was not convinced.

"I can't," he said sullenly. "He's too big. I haven't a chance. He's taller'n me an' everything."

"Peter," said Mr. Squibb, "look me in the eye. You are going to lick McCoy. Do you understand? You are going to knock time out of him!"

He spoke with such unwonted intensity of manner and language and looked so earnestly into his son's eyes that the boy was awed and half persuaded.

"Yes, Father," he said simply.

"All right. Don't forget it. Now the question is, how are you going to do it? And I'll tell you. We are going to stage a little demonstration of the value of superior training. I mean to say that you must learn how to fight so that what you lack in weight and muscle you can make up in brains. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Father. Are you going to show me how?"

"I am sorry, my boy, that my education has not included a course in the manly art of self-defence. I mean, that I never learned to fight properly, so I can't teach you. But what I'm going to have you do is to take some lessons in boxing at a place I know in New York and then you'll be able to put this big stiff McCoy to sleep the next time he tries to bully you."

"I get you, Father," said Peter Jr. with

promising entnusiasm. "When do I start?"

"I'll see about it to-morrow," replied his father and resumed his reading, greatly pleased at his son's show of interest. As for the younger Squibb, he went in search of the newspapers for the week back and was soon wrapped in close study of the sporting page illustrations of the fighting attitudes of pugilists then in the public eye. He tried on a few of these attitudes himself before a mirror afterwards and was pleased with the effect.

Mr. Squibb lost no time in arranging for his son's venture into the new field of learning. Peter Jr. was soon making regular trips to the city to an institution where his education was broadened by consistent work with the gloves under the tutelage of a low-browed, battered-visaged gentleman who spoke a curious and fascinating language. The boy was normally indifferent to scholastic training but he took to his new study with enthusiasm. His father bought and installed a punching bag in the barn at home and with that Peter Jr. improved his spare hours of the days he did not attend classes in the city. He picked up rapidly the terminology of the science and soon spoke with easy familiarity of left hooks, uppercuts, knock-outs, bread-baskets, bouts, guards, rounds, footwork and other matters of technique. Also he followed closely the achievements of contemporary practitioners of the art of fisticuffs and edified his family with timely discourses concerning them.

By his father's advice, however the boy kept his new accomplishment a secret from his schoolmates. Also at his father's suggestion he bore meekly all further insults and acts of oppression by McCoy. Happily they did not amount to much for the big boy was apparently satisfied for the time being by the thrashing he had lately administered. He would have been dumfounded if he could have known that the submissive lad who gave him such a wide berth was devoting so much time and labor to preparation for revenge.

Thus matters ran along until near the closing of school for the summer. Mr. Squibb had dropped in for a brief interview with Peter Jr.'s instructor.

"How does the boy get along?" he asked.

"Fine!" said the professor heartily. "Th' kid is light an' quick on his feet an' he packs a punch in his right that's a little paralyzer. An' he uses his bean for something besides a punching bag for th' other feller."

"Think he can hold his own with any boy his size, do you?"

"Sure he kin. There ain't a kid in his class around here that kin stand up to him more'n ten rounds."

"He has a fight scheduled with a boy considerably larger and stronger than he is," said Mr. Squibb, "but he isn't a boxer. Can Peter whip him?"

"If they don't hug," replied the professor a little cautiously. "That's what kids generally do in a scrap. But Pete kin lick him if he keeps loose an' uses his right. I'll give him a tip on that."

Shortly thereafter Mr. Squibb held brief converse with his son.

"Peter," he said, "Professor Quinn says you've developed into a good boxer. If I were you I'd lam this guy McCoy the next time he tries to put anything across."

A look of acute intelligence passed between father and son.

"All right, Father," said Peter Jr. cheerfully.

It was not Mr. Squibb's good fortune to witness the battle, for it took place after school the next day before he had come home from the city. Those who had that privilege, however, were astonished and delighted. They were Peter Jr's. school mates and their sympathies were all with that mysteriously gifted warrior. They formed a ring in the rear of the school following Peter Jr's. surprising resentment of a surreptitious blow given him by Chicky McCoy just to keep his hand in.

McCoy, nearly a head taller and fully twenty-five pounds heavier than his rebellious victim, was vaguely alarmed by the smaller boy's confident coolness and scientific fighting attitude. But he blusteringly relied on his superior weight and strength and opened the battle with a bull-like rush with the intention of clinching and getting his opponent underneath. To his great astonishment Peter Jr. was not there when

he arrived but had nimbly side-stepped and administered the little paralyzer with staggering effect. Again and again McCoy plunged in a vain effort to close with the smaller lad and choke him into submission, but every time Peter Jr. skilfully evaded him and placed a jab or two where they would do the most good. Finally McCoy, nearly exhausted, frightened and disheartened by the shrill cheering and encouragement given Peter Jr. in increasing volume, fell back upon defensive tactics.

Thereupon Peter Jr. assumed a slashing and bewildering offensive. He danced about the big, awkward boy in the center of the ring, darting in and getting through the latter's inaffective guard with punishing blows and retreating before he could be hit heavily himself. Nothing like it had ever been seen before in that field where the approved style of fighting was the primitive rough and tumble ending with the victor sitting astride the vanquished and pummeling him until he cried for quarter. The end came when Peter Jr. landed a left jab to the wind and followed with the little paralyzer on the point of the jaw. McCoy, his nose and lip bleeding, his ears puffing up and his whole countenance bruised and swelled, dropped his arms helplessly and burst into tears. The next instant he turned, pushed his way blindly through the crowd and made for home, still weeping. Peter Jr. was left the hero of a crowd of boys whose delight and excitement were so great that they could express themselves in little but a shrill and collective "Jiminy Crickets!"

Of all this Mr. Squibb was wholly unaware when he alighted from the 5.53 from the city that afternoon. With his hands in his pockets and a freshly lit cigar between his lips he started to saunter slowly home along the elm and maple shaded street. He had gone but a little way, however, when he was accosted by a man who emerged suddenly from a side alley. This individual was a large, rough-looking artisan of pronounced alcoholic flavor and evident Hibernian extraction. His demeanor was hostile, his language threatening.

"Are you Peter Squibb?" he demanded.

"I am," mildly replied Mr. Squibb.

"I t'ought so," grunted the other. "Me name is McCoy. Belike you'll remember me. You're the little runt I licked the first time you lived in this town and I've a damn good notion to do it again!"

"What for?" inquired Mr. Squibb gently. He gave no ground before his old schoolmate. If anything, he edged a little closer to that irate person.

"What for? An' that young devil of yours just after near murderin' me Denny! What for? An' him in bed an' lookin' like a load of brick had fell on him! I'll show you what for!"

McCoy shook a knobby red fist in Mr. Squibb's face. Across the street two villagers, scenting trouble, stopped to watch.

Mr. Squibb, his hands still in his pockets, his cigar still between his lips, did not retreat before the fist, but disconcertingly took a step forward. The glowing end of his cigar came close to the McCoy countenance, and Mr. Squibb's eyes looked unwaveringly into the McCoy eyes, although they had to look up to do it.

"McCoy," said Mr. Squibb with alarming quietness, "if my boy has whipped yours, your son has got only what he deserved. He is a coward and a bully or he wouldn't be fighting boys half his size. He is his father's son, McCoy. You were a coward and a bully, and the only reason you ever licked me was because you were a head taller than I was and about four times as strong. You never fought a boy your size."

The little runt was not behaving according to schedule. Mr. McCoy felt decidedly uncomfortable. He didn't like that face so near his and he took a step backwards. Mr. Squibb followed.

"Moreover, McCoy," continued Mr. Squibb, his hands still in his pockets, his cigar still threatening the McCoy chin, his eyes still holding the McCoy eyes, and his voice still in the same peculiar gentle tone, "moreover, McCoy, all that happened twenty-five years ago and what was possible then isn't possible now. Maybe you could lick me then but you can't now. If you want to make trouble there's no time like the present. Start something if you want to, McCoy."

Mr. McCoy was completely at a loss.

He couldn't understand it at all. He swallowed noisily. He took another step backwards. Mr. Squibb followed and brought his face a little closer than before to the McCoy face.

"If you think it's a healthy thing to do, McCoy," he said softly, "start something. No time like the present."

Mr. McCoy looked helplessly about him. He started to say something and choked. Suddenly he turned his back.

"Aw, go to hell," he muttered shakily and walked rapidly away.

Across the street the two spectators laughed. Mr. Squibb smiled amiably and resumed his stroll homeward. A second time, however, he was interrupted before he had gone far. This time it was his son, who was bound for the grocery on an errand for his mother. He showed signs of recent combat but was elated in spirit. Father and son smiled upon each other.

"My boy," said Mr. Squibb, "I hear on reliable authority that you have put it all over young McCoy."

"I licked him good, Father," replied Peter Jr. simply but with pride.

"Good. Glad to hear it. *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis.* The power of education over ignorance, of will power over brute force. We have done ourselves proud, my boy; we have each erased an item from the debit side of personality and added one to the credit side. Will you go to the drug store and have something with me?"

The boy found part of his father's remarks obscure, but the closing question was crystal clear.

"You're on, Father," he said briskly.

Hand in hand the two Squibbs set out for the soda fountain.

FOR NOVEMBER: THE GIRL AT THE LUZON *by Harriette Wilbur,* a story of courtship and marriage in the rice fields of the Philippines. Bughan, an Igorrote girl, and Umahog, her lover, build themselves a house and enter upon their year of trial marriage. Bughan wants one thing only to make her happiness complete; she wishes Umahog to be a head-hunter. But her persistence in this desire drives the unwilling Umahog from the new home. When next he greets her, after many months, Umahog is Americanized in every detail, from his non-skid rubber heels to his fourteen karat smile. Bughan thinks that perhaps she doesn't care so much for a head to decorate the gable over the door. What is a head to decorate a gable over a door compared to ——just Umahog?

SHADRACH AND THE FIERY FURNACE

By ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE

Th superintendent of a cottonseed-oil mill senses trouble whenever the mill whistle blows in the wee small hours. Twice he responds, and each time finds a man's job waiting for him.

SOMETIMES the telephone line between the cottonseed-oil mill and the superintendent's house would not work; then the great whistle on the mill would blare across the marshy flats, calling raucously for the master. It was not a pleasant summons, especially in the dead of night. There were nervous people living on the edge of town who declared that they had been terrified into believing it the trump of doom. But Charley Piollet, the superintendent, knew that it meant no such fantastic crisis; it was merely a leaky valve in one of the cylinder-heads, or the misadjustment of a linter, or, at worst, it might mean that one of the Negro workmen of the night-shift had been injured.

It was two o'clock of a rainy January morning. Dead asleep lay Charleston. Gray mists shut out the harbor, the two great rivers between whose arms the city slept, the brackish marshes and mud-fields north of the town, on which the black bulk of the mill loomed, and the dark, mighty forests to northward. Mists and rain everywhere, blurring the light, dripping from wires and trees and houses, softly curtaining the windows of the sleepers. It was a night for heavy sleep; but Charley Piollet was awakened by the futile tinkling of the telephone bell. It showed that someone was calling him, but couldn't get the message through. A moment later the muffled, long, husky shout of the great whistle told its story. It was calling for one out of all those who were sleeping.

Piollet slipped quickly out of bed. In five minutes he was dressed. Fifteen minutes after the whistle had blown his little car drew up before the mist-shrouded mill. The superintendent's tall form bulked huge in the fog. He strode into the office.

"Well, Dave?" he asked quickly.

The night foreman was a Negro, small and brown and middle-aged. He personified faithfulness. He and Piollet together had run the oil mill for twelve years; and between them there was a perfect understanding that found its expression in their mutual trust and good will.

"I had some trouble with a man, sir," Dave Mullin replied. "I couldn't exactly handle him; and the other boys—I didn't want them to get into it. Sorry to call you, Cap'n, but I needed you."

"Who is this fellow? Is he white?"

"No, sir, he's colored. He's never been in these parts before. He must have dropped off an A. C. L. freight."

"What did he try on you, Dave?"

"He said he wanted a job in the mill at the best figure we paid, and he wanted it in a hurry. I told him to go on about his business; but he began to stir up trouble among the boys, asking them what they were getting, and saying that they could get twice as much in Mobile or Pittsburg or at Hog Island."

"Where's this walking delegate now?"

Piollet had slouched off his overcoat and was drawing on his overalls. Then he fitted on his head a tight little rubber cap. It pays to take a few precautions when one is moving about among the whirling belts, roaring linters, and gurgling presses of an oil mill.

"He asked me if I was the boss," Dave went on. "I told him I was just the night foreman. Then he said he'd make the boss give him the job he wanted the minute he came."

"Been drinking?" shot out Piollet, not

sure but that Dave had called him without much reason.

"Yes, sir. And, Cap'n," and the little brown man came close, a light in his eyes that showed both affection and apprehension, "I ask you to be careful with that stranger. Take your gun out of the safe, please, Cap'n," Dave pleaded. "This man is a bad actor."

In his heart Dave Mullin had not a doubt but that the man who stood before him could give a good account of himself. Charlie Piollet had the height and the strength and the courage. His huge shoulders, his massive chest, his long and powerful arms, and his broad, peculiarly masculine hands had not come to him by chance. Living a hardy life and toiling for years with machinery had made him what he was. Moreover, the direct approach he made to men and his straight steady way of looking at them were steps toward mastering even the most untractable of those with whom he had to deal. Now, when his foreman, solicitious for his safety, mentioned the pistol, Piollet began to smile deprecatingly.

"Dave, the company made me buy that thing, but I never expect to use it. Come along and see the fun. Where is this friend of yours?"

Still protesting under his breath against Piollet's lack of caution, the foreman led the way to the engine room. Down a long platform they passed, where great windows opened on the ceaseless activity of the oil mill. Through one of these the superintendent's quick glance saw, under the suffused light of the long room, the gleaming bodies of half-naked Negroes toiling about the giant cookers. They had been trained to work with machinery, and they had learned that it would not wait for men to take their time; therefore they moved about with an ease and precision and good-natured timeliness that was worth watching. From chutes that ran across the mill, high up, the cotton seed that had had its thorough grinding, was being shunted into the cookers, passed out on the pans, and straightway borne to the powerful presses that received the huge, damp, warm cakes and squeezed from them the lustrous oil.

Piollet noticed that the Negroes were not singing as usual. They were on the job, but they were thoughtful. As the two came to the door of the engine room, Dave touched the superintendent's arm.

"Yonder he is, Cap'n, leaning against that window."

Charlie Piollet saw the Negro, but he paid no attention to him. What his trained eyes saw was that there were more men in the room than was necessary. He asked a hulking worker in no uncertain tones what he was doing in the engine room when his place was with the linters. He looked at a couple of gauges on the big engine. He measured with an eye of satisfaction the steady, rhythmic rocking of the crank throws. Though he seemed preoccupied, he was aware that all the Negroes in the room had their eyes upon him. Two of the yard workmen had come up on the gangway outside the open windows. Piollet could feel that all of them were expecting something to happen. They were not to be disappointed.

The burly stranger slouched over to the superintendent.

"Is you the boss here?" he asked, with no hint of deference.

Piollet looked him over slowly. The fellow had been drinking. He wore a derby hat on the back of his head. His baggy suit was indigo in color. His shoes were an angry red.

"What do you want?" Piollet asked.

"I wants a job what will pay me good wages."

"What can you do?"

The Negro realized that he was being overheard.

"Anything I wants to do," he said boldly.

"We can't make use of your kind here. We handle machinery, and we can't trust it to men who drink. You can get out of the mill through that door yonder."

He pointed with his thumb to one of the exits, turning at the same time to continue the examination of his engine. He opened an oil cup, tapped a feed pump, and stooped down to study the movements of one of the small eccentrics.

It was not that Piollet would deny a man work without good cause; nor was it

because the stranger looked foreboding. There was Ben Jackson, the engineer of the cookers. Piollet had taken him straight from the chain gang. The superintendent had promised to give him a chance, and the man had made good, but Ben had not approached him as this man had. Piollet demanded respect from every man under him, a respect so natural that a man would show it even when drunk. He felt that he had no place for this kind of fellow.

Yet the stranger evidently thought so, for he had not moved from his tracks since he had been shown where the door was. He stood in what might be described as a threatening manner over Piollet. Dave Mullin had come near. It was evident that Dave was excited. Though the men in the room pretended to be doing their work, they watched the scene intently.

It was a curious crowd that Piollet had to handle in that mill. There was hardly a man there to whom he had not shown some personal favor; supplying this one with medicine, showing that one how to start a savings account, and giving another clothes that were sorely needed. They loved Piollet and feared him, but it was in their nature, since they were intensely human, always to be eager to accept any suggestion of respite from toil, or to listen to talk about better wages. Since this was so, they were not wholly out of sympathy with the truculent figure who was refusing Charlie Piollet's invitation to withdraw.

Piollet knew something about elementary psychology. He knew that his men were expecting him to eject the stranger without any assistance from them. They would give it if he called; but it should not be necessary for the man who had ruled them with a sense of his superiority to need them now. Piollet knew what the situation required. As he stood up from examining the engine he let his eye rest with cold surprise on the huge Negro.

"Have you come back?" he asked. "Couldn't you find your way out?"

"I hain't never gone. I wants my rights." He ended this declaration with an oath.

"I've got a job for you," said Poillet suddenly. "Come with me."

The superintendent led the way through the door to which he had a few moments before pointed. Every eye in the engine room was on the pair. The clanking of the great engine and even the oily hissing of the presses in the next room were more distinct as a hush came over the men. Just outside the door the gangway was widened into a platform on which the cotton seed was dumped from the cars, before being relayed to the seed room. When they had come out on this platform, Charlie Piollet paused.

"Now, stranger," he said in a matter-of-fact tone, "you are trespassing on the property of this mill. There are two ways for you to leave this private place. One is along the gangway there, and down the road through the mill gate. The other is off the edge of the platform here. Take your choice, but be quick about it."

"But where's the job? You can't fool with me like this, mister."

"Your job, stranger, is to clear out or to whip me."

"I ain't gwine. You has got to—"

What followed can best be described by saying that it was an impact. There was a moment of furious struggle. There was a thronging of Negro workmen toward the platform. Little Dave Mullin was closest to the two men. Suddenly they broke apart; then like slight-of-hand work a burly form was lifted high and hurled off into the dripping fog. It fell heavily on the railroad tracks below. There in the rain it lay still.

Charlie Piollet, though his great shoulders were heaving slightly, walked back, unperturbed, into the engine room. He spoke brusquely, yet not without a certain kindness, to those whom he saw away from their posts. He passed over to one of the presses, dipped a finger into the oil bubbling over the grates, and tasted it.

"Cooker's too hot, Fred," he said to the pressman. "That cake was scorched."

Suddenly he was aware of Dave at his elbow.

"Cap'n,"—and the night foreman was apologetic—"dat man ain't done moved yet—dat man you done kill."

"Go down, Dave, and take him out to

the gate. If he is really hurt, I want to know. My object was not to injure the fellow, but simply to get rid of him."

Dave Mullen went about the task assigned; and Piollet went over into the room where the huge cookers were steaming fragrantly.

"Too hot, Ben," he said. "Ease her off a bit. Last cakes were a little scorched. How's that sick boy of yours?"

The giant black engineer eased off the steam with the skill of a born mechanic.

"Better, Cap'n, some better. The medicine you bring him done him good. And I's much obliged to you, Cap'n, for the pig you done send me. Yes, sir," he ended impotently, being unskilful in the matter of giving thanks with the lips.

A few minutes later, as Piollet was stripping off his overalls in the smoky mill office, Dave entered.

"Well, Dave, was he able to navigate?"

"Oh, yes, Cap'n," chuckled the little man, "he can cruise 'bout considerable. He's done gone out the gate now. He says he's gwine back Mobile."

The telephone that seemed forever wanting the superintendent, sometimes gave him long distance. Charlie Piollet had hardly finished his breakfast at home that morning before a call came for him from the mill in Sumter.

"Hello, Piollet," sounded the voice from the sister mill nearly a hundred miles away, "we'd like you to run up this morning. We can't get our new shreaders on the linters to work, and we know you have yours adjusted. Can you come? Yes. You can get here at 11.40. How long will it take? I can't tell exactly. We are all balled up on the thing. Yours is the only mill in the district that has these new things working. You'll come, then? Good! I'll meet you."

Noon of that day found Piollet in the Sumter mill. His adjustments there, that set the glittering new type of shreaders merrily whirling, chewing with frantic haste and human intelligence the last vestige of lint from the cotton seeds, were no sooner completed than a day letter was handed him. It was from the company's central office in Atlanta.

"Visit all mills in your district," it ran, "for purpose of establishing new linter system. Harland takes charge until your return to Charleston. Be sure to include Florence, Darlington, Columbia, Bennettsville, and Orangeburg. Stay with each mill until sure shreaders working well. Wire us as you get each started right."

It was two weeks before he was back in Charleston.

He reached the city at nine o'clock at night; but before thinking of going to bed he ran out to the mill in his car, interviewed Dave, took a careful and fond look at the huge, pulsating engine, and greeted the boys singing at their work.

"Call me if you need me, Dave," he said on leaving. "The whistle gets me better than the 'phone."

But when the great whistle began to shriek and call, shortly after midnight, the superintendent woke slowly to a realization of the meaning of the clamorous voice.

"Trouble again," he muttered. "I believe Dave's getting nervous."

If however, he had been dubious of the necessity for the night foreman's call, all doubt was dissipated when he got his car on the road for the mill. Far across the marsh-flats he saw a strange red glow.

"Fire! and at my mill!" he exclaimed giving his motor full power.

His car flew along the flat road, dashed down the shell driveway of the mill yard, and drew up suddenly. Piollet sprang out.

Running down the gangway, he was met by groups of frightened Negroes hurrying in the opposite direction. One of these he caught by the arm.

"Where is it?"

"In the seed house, sir. We'se gwine for water."

Dashing through the engine room Piollet came to the open doors of the vast room known as the "seed house," where all the incoming cotton seed was piled. Within it was a roaring furnace. The pine flooring, the unlinted cotton, the stacks of bags —everything was aflame.

"The sprinklers!" Piollet shouted to Dave Mullin who, standing at the head of a line of Negroes, was dashing bucket after

bucket of water futilely on the hungry fringes of the flames.

"Something's jammed, sir!" Dave shouted back chokingly through the smoke. "The sprinklers won't work!" He shook his head for emphasis as he was forced to retreat from the terrific heat.

The huge tank above the mill had been designed to serve just such an emergency as this. It was full of water waiting to be released. The sprinklers were set to extinguish just such a fire as this. Charlie Piollet jerked with shrewd haste at the releasing chain-ends. He knew too much about machinery to try to force his will upon it. The chains would not budge. Something had locked the apparatus. Charlie saw that no bucket line could ever stop such a fire. Already the energy of the men was abating. From the seed-house the flames would roar on to the mill proper, devouring all in its path. The great tanks close by held nearly 60,000 gallons of oil, the product of months of work by the mill. The heat of such a fire might mean disaster to them.

Turning from his hopeless tinkering with the chains, Piollet beckoned to Dave.

"I'm going up," he said to the Negro who had reached his side, at the same time pointing to the sprinkler rods that ran along the floor beams over their heads. "Something's jammed. I'm going up to get it loose."

The foreman made a weak protest, but Piollet was already halfway up. His powerful arms drew him up swiftly and surely. He pulled himself over a beam, his hand gripping the sprinkler rod. The smoke was stifling. Sparks and suffocating waves of heat swiftly thronged into his face. But he felt his way on. Now he was over the fire itself. Behind him and below him he could see the upturned faces of the terrified workmen. He came to where a set of cogs controlled the rods. He could hardly see them, but he knew all about them. Feverishly his great intelligent hands ran over them. Something had told him that the trouble was here. It was. Piollet's fingers felt a foreign object. It was a crooked twelve-penny nail. Dropping from a rafter, or perhaps tossed up the by engine belt, it had found lodgement in the cogs, blocking the action of the sprinklers.

The man jerked out the nail. Dimly he could see Dave Mullin through the red glare. He motioned violently for the foreman to pull down on the chains. He shouted, motioning again. He reeled, clutched for a beam; but the smoke blinded him. He missed it, his strong hand closing convulsively on air. Swooning he fell into the crimson maw of the fire. After him came the water, sufficient to curb the fire slowly, send puffs of steam hissing toward the roof, to put it out at last; but not sufficient to save Charlie Piollet.

Yet it was Charlie Piollet, the same and not the same, who , three weeks later, put out a hand from a hospital cot and greeted little Dave Mullin who had tiptoed fearfully down the big white room.

Their talk could be of but one thing: the fire at the mill.

"Tell me all about it, Dave. You see, I don't even know how it started."

In his quaint way, Dave gave the superintendent a full account, ending with a reassuring, "She's running about as usual, about as well as she ever runs when you're away,"

Piollet, whose strength had not as yet come back to him, began to feel drowsy.

"By the way, Dave," he asked, "how did you boys get me out of that place? I thought I saw Ben Jackson's face—"

The papers, at the time of the fire had been full of the story of the rescue of the superintendent from the flames by the daring of one of the Negro workmen; but Piollet knew nothing of it.

"We didn't do it, Cap'n, nor Ben neither. It was that Shadrach."

"Who?"

"That new man that Mr. Harland done take on while you was away to Sumter."

"Strange he should risk his life to save me when he didn't even know me," Piollet said drowsily.

"He done know you, Cap'n! He tell me he wouldn't work for no other man in the world but you. Ain't you know him now, Cap'n? He is dat man—dat same man you done kill."

THE BUSHER BELLIGERENT

By WILL H. GREENFIELD

This busher's batting average isn't startling; but when it comes to fighting, he leads the league. Newspaper men, umpires, players, spectators and even club owners get ready to crawl under the grandstand long before they can see the whites of his eyes.

ENRY Sparhawk was a mild looking young man, but he hadn't been with the Scorpions a week before the veterans of the team tagged him as the freshest and scrappiest busher they had ever glimpsed in process of development. And they had surveyed some self-admitted crackerjacks.

Henry neither looked nor dressed the part of a fighter. His voice was low-pitched, musical, and he looked as the musketeer Aramis might in modern dress. His enthusiam for trouble amounted to a positive mania. On the spring training trip our manager, Pete Muldoon, got into an argument with the head waiter at our hotel. The waiter had said that he wouldn't favor ball players above the other guests.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Muldoon.

"Yes, what do you mean by that?" echoed Henry, who came up at that moment.

"Say, kid, what's your trouble with this waiter?" asked Muldoon.

"Same as yours," declared Henry.

"Well, what's mine?" Pete wanted to know.

"I don't know," said Henry, "and I don't care, but if there's going to be a fight around here, I'm in on it!"

The next day big "Pop" McGuire, our veteran third baseman, had a clash with Henry. Pop told him to buy a flat bat.

"You won't hit your weight without one," said Pop disdainfully. "You'll meet real pitchers when we get up north."

"Hope so," warbled Henry. "Haven't seen any real ball players down here."

"Would you know one?" barked Pop.

Henry was probably as remote from any emotion that even vaguely approximated fear as any man could well be, but he jumped at the sound of the big third sacker's bellow and came right back with:

"Here's one, old top, and my species don't grow on every bush, or in every bush league."

"Why, you conceited guttersnipe!" roared Pop. "Who are you? You ain't got any reputation."

"No," cooed Henry, "but I'm going to get one right now by taking you behind the club house and beating your fat head off."

And that is precisely what he did. McGuire had come into proletarian vogue because he could hit like a pile driver with either hand, and there were men in the big leagues who would have preferred a bout with a buzz saw to a fight with him; but in a miraculously few seconds the hilarious Henry had knocked him out with a short right hook that seemed to travel little more than five inches. More than a dozen Scorpions saw the battle and there followed such a murmur and buzz of amazed and admiring comment as must have reminded one of the upward whirring of wings of a just flushed covey of partridges. Henry was the picture of indifference.

"Maybe some of you friends of Mr. McGuire's think it was a fluke," he remarked nonchalantly. "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the unconscious party. Do I hear a voice?"

He did not. The silence was so profound we could hear Pop's heart ticking as he opened his eyes and stared around. He scrambled to his feet and looked at Henry before he grabbed and shook his hand with a grave face.

"I ain't the biggest boob in the big show, kid," he said gravely, "but there's few that want to mix it with me. If you can play ball anything like you can fight I'll say you make the team."

Then Henry said things that had always been regarded as a certain prelude to violent collapse.

"I'm a better ball player than I am a fighter, you bughouse burly," he announced genially. "I'm not a bit proud over handing you a lacing either, for as a fighter I think you are as big a hunk of domestic Swiss as the Wisconsin cheese belt. I'll fight you again any time and I'm not getting careless with my unbridled health when I tell you you're an easy mark."

Pop McGuire's rage was so deep that it left the surface of him calm.

"You're the boss, kiddo," he said in a husky voice, and without another word he strode off massaging his jaw with his palm.

In the first game of the regular season Henry ran afoul of Johnny Ford, "the fighting umpire." He had drawn three wide ones and a single strike and was anxious to walk, that being easier and more certain than hitting the ball. The next one was a trifle high and a little wide.

"Strike two!" Ford shouted.

Henry glared at him.

"How can I hit that kind, stupid?" he inquired sweetly.

"Get a longer bat, you little shrimp!" rejoined Ford with crackling emphasis.

His next words were uttered when he recovered consciousness, and they were: "Was anybody killed when the grandstand fell?" Experience is a good teacher, but Johnny Ford thought the tuition fee excessive. "I didn't mind the clout on the mustache," he said afterward, "but now every busher in the country will be swinging at me. Wonder where that kid learned to hit?"

Henry was not an excruciatingly clever ball player; but he had a margin on our old right fielder, and Muldoon used him in the regular line-up whenever he was not suffering suspension for his rough work on the field. With him in the game the Scorpions became the scrappiest team on the circuit, for it was next to impossible to play with him and not imbibe some of the fighting spirit he kept on tap.

He ran wild on the bases because our opponents knew that to block him with any degree of force meant a warm session under the grandstand after the game. And there was no denying that the umpires gave him all the best of it, for there wasn't one he hadn't interviewed off the diamond; and no one was looking for another interview. Johnny Ford was the boldest of the lot, but when Henry got after him even "the fighting umpire" plainly wabbled, lurched, and functioned badly.

Pop McGuire's earnest efforts to please and propitiate his conqueror met with disaster. Muldoon persuaded him to extend the olive branch, for the two men had not been on speaking terms since the beginning of the season.

"I'll even the score one of these fine days," growled Pop.

"No, no," said our manager. "Appeal to Henry's better nature. He is crazy about your favorite black bat. Give him that, and say you hope he gets as many hits with it as you have. Return good for evil. Heap coals of fire on his head."

None of us expected that Pop would do as Muldoon asked him, but he crossed us by handing over his famous black bat to Henry. The first day the latter used the old war club he struck out every time at bat, and that evening Pop McGuire sported a black eye.

"Henry did it," said Pop stolidly. "He said I put a jinx on the stick and passed it to him for spite."

"This is too much," said Muldoon. "You attend to that eye and I'll attend to Henry."

Now Pete Muldoon's heart was big and red and unafraid, yet when he laid down the law to the meek-looking Henry Sparhawk he had an overpowering realization of his own atomity.

"It's not right, Henry," he said intrepidly facing his right fielder in the presence of his entire team. "Because you are a rough-house guy you have no license to cripple the team by taking a punch at everybody on it if they happen to cross

you. Look at McGuire now! He might be out of the game for a week, and we need him worse than the Allies need wheat."

"Say, Muldoon," purred Henry, glancing around at the Scorpions present, "I want you to remember that nobody ever gave you permission to get any gayer with me than the rest of these mutton-heads—or even as gay. Maybe you think because you boss this menagerie you can shoot funny talk at little me. Don't ever believe the half of it. The next time you undertake to call me down in public I'll forget your age and fix you up for the last sad rites. Now scatter! I don't feel entertaining at this juncture!"

Whatever Muldoon would have liked to have said or done he kept exclusively to himself, and the rest of us—well, the rest of us scattered.

McGuire went to see an eye specialist and returned with a card which read: "Sub-derman hemorrhage: Edema of upper and lower lid, especially marked at inner canthus. Traumatic conjunctivitis."

When Muldoon first read this he nearly fainted. "Is the eye ruined forever?" he gasped.

"Not quite," said McGuire gravely, "not quite. It's only what we used to call a 'shiner,' and a piece of raw beefsteak will fix it up all right."

"You scared me skinny!" murmured Pete. "That's an awful name for a black eye. It sounds like total blindness and a few other things."

Pete's eye would not permit him to play third for us the next day, and in the dressing room after the game Henry came over to me with a worried look.

"What's the matter with that big bum's lamp, Bill?" he asked in a hurried whisper.

"Traumatic conjunctivitis," I answered before I thought.

"Lord!" he gasped, and stood staring about him like a man facing news he could not assimilate. "Will he be blind?"

I said nothing, but my slight head movement was one of affirmation; and he rushed off muttering hoarsely to himself. I told Pete Muldoon what had happened.

"Here's a chance to take the fight out of him," I said. "He's under the impression that Pop McGuire will be blind and is naturally filled with remorse. Keep up the deception and you can tame this man-killer."

"I don't know about that," said the manager dubiously. "Maybe, and maybe not. He'll be after your scalp when he learns what traumatic conjunctivitis really is."

And it was even as he said. Henry jostled me the next morning as I was entering the club house. He had been waiting for me, and his eyes were blazing—blazing and venomous.

"That traumatic stuff for another bum," he said with a disagreeable chuckle, and I was out of the game that day with *two* black eyes. I counted myself fortunate at that, for he worked on me with a glacial ferocity that made me fear the worst, and but for the timely and valorous intervention of Pete Muldoon I believe I would have been slaughtered.

"It was fine and dandy of you to make him quit, Pete," I thanked our manager, "but he's very likely to have it in for you now, and you'll have to keep your eye peeled."

"Bill," said Pete in a burst of confidence, "I don't mind him, and I don't fear him. He is a pretty fresh kid, but I know of one who was fresher than he ever was. At least they all told me that when I first broke into the big show with the Scorpions. I won't say I was quite as scrappy as Henry, but they tell me my freshness never hurt me any. I think Henry will lose some of his pugnacity after a time, and when he gets docile enough to keep in a box score every day he's going to be a valuable man. Have you noticed the improvement in his playing?"

I had, and I said so, but I coudn't forbear to add that Henry's status as a ball player was difficult to estimate fairly because of the cerulean frequency with which he was ordered out of games and off the grounds.

"A bench warmer is no benefit to a team," I wound up, "and Henry draws more suspensions than any man in baseball."

"Righto, Bill," said Pete smilingly. "Still we must not forget that Henry is one of the fastest birds that ever came out of the bushes and a natural slugger. Nobody has anything on him in sheer sprinting speed and he has the keenest batting eye I've seen in some time. If we can make him drop the fight stuff—take the cockiness out of him and substitute confidence—he'll be a sensation. He has all the fire and flash and natural physical advantages of a Cobb."

"And a primitive lust for battle that a caveman would call cruel," I supplemented. "How can you kill it?"

"Give it up at this session," laughed Pete, "but it's got to be done."

I felt no animosity toward Henry and he seemed to cherish no ill feeling for me. I had to play alongside him every day he played, and more than once he was magnanimous enough to concede that I was a fair center fielder and might one day make a bona fide ball player. Growing bold, I told him—what was the truth—that Pete Muldoon would be willing to pay him a much larger salary than he was getting if he curbed his fighting instincts and achieved a record for consecutive games played.

I don't know how I ever summoned the courage to broach the subject and I recall vividly the interval of heart-wringing suspense that chalked my face as he regarded me with glassy, fishlike eyes.

"Where did you get that stuff?" he demanded with a blood-chilling hitch of his compact shoulders.

I was glad enough to refer him to Pete Muldoon for additional information, and I was pleasantly shocked when he thanked me and walked away. A day or so later he asked me what the other Scorpions thought of him. In a flutter of extreme gratification I replied that they regarded him as a gentleman and an artist while deprecating his unquenchable tendency to fight; and I added of my own accord that I was grieved beyond words that he should continue to prostitute his talents to such vicious and unnecessary ends. Then I waited for the explosion in gasping consternation. And it didn't come!

"Bill," he said softly, "I simply had to fight everybody that looked cockeyed at me. For over two years I've been the sparring partner of our great middleweight champion, and he'll tell you I can make him step some. I came to this outfit with the purpose of putting the fear of God in the heart of every mortal associated with the game of baseball. I've beat up newspaper men, umpires, players, spectators and club owners. I haven't overlooked anybody and I haven't been licked. I didn't enjoy the job except when I trimmed a real rotter who furnished just cause; I'm not a brute. But I simply had to lick the baseball world. I wanted to stick in the big league and that was the only way!"

My incredulity must have shown too plainly in my face for he proceeded with his astounding explanation ere I could frame a word.

"Of course you can't believe me now," he continued, "but wait till I tell you the wherefore and the why. I have just signed a contract with Pete Muldoon for five years at a salary which some stars would consider handsome, and I have promised to cut out the fight stuff. Tomorrow my name goes in the box score—my real name, Bill, for Henry Sparhawk is not. My brother was as good as I'll ever be as a ball player, but his name tripped him and chased him out of the big league. You remember Percy Deer, Bill?"

"Well!" said I with truth. "He was ridiculed into oblivion!"

"I'm ready for that same stuff, Bill," he purred, with daggers glinting in his eyes. "They christened me Cecil Clarence—Cecil Clarence Deer is my name. Do I hear ribald laughter?"

He did not. And the baseball world exhibited the same discretion!

OSKALOOSA'S ALIEN

By JEROME BEATTY

Of all the men in town Jim Carlson alone remains unmoved by reports of German atrocities. Not until he witnesses a sample of German "efficiency" does he rage at all that is German and cast aside the moth-eaten mantle of the pacifist.

THIS was Sunday, the day Nellie Carlson got her ginger snaps, her reward for promising not to bark and annoy the neighbors while Jim Carlson was doing odd jobs for farmers and while Nellie was locked in the granary back of the Palace Livery Barn.

Nellie always promised faithfully, by putting her paws on Jim's knees and whining affirmatively as she shoved her nose into Jim's big, rough hands. And usually she kept her promise. She tried hard, this wistful, watery-eyed little mongrel, but sometimes Jim stayed away so long that the limit of canine endurance was reached and Jim would return late in the evening and find her complaining in a loud voice, complaints that would change to yelps of joy and gratification when, by shoving her nose tight under the granary door, she would sense the coming of her master, no matter how carefully he would tiptoe down the alley.

On week days Nellie always was at Jim's heels, or riding curled up on the seat beside him while he drove the Palace Livery Barn's hack that met all the trains. Oskaloosa had no trains Sunday, so that was Jim's day off and he worked at one of his other professions—repairing broken windmills, pumps or farm implements, dynamiting stumps or helping on a rush job of loading corn or wheat.

Jim never took Nellie with him on Sunday, for she often got in the way, especially on the days he was blowing up stumps, when the natural inquisitiveness of her sex made her long to run and dig up the sticks of dynamite that Jim buried and to see whether they were good for the teeth. On week days, however, she did just as she pleased. Her place was on the seat beside Jim and never was there so much baggage that it couldn't be arranged to leave room for Nellie to ride.

They called her "Nellie Carlson" in Oskaloosa and laughed at Jim as they would at a child with queer notions. Nellie was as tiny and weak as Jim was big and strong; Jim, a hulk of muscle, a stolid, slow-thinking laborer, lacking in imagination, working mechanically at the things some one else had shown him how to do, Jim had no enemies, no friends—no friends except Nellie.

He was sitting in the sunshine on a box by the granary door. Beside him was the penny's worth of ginger snaps that he bought every Saturday night after he had delivered the Flyer's mail bag at the post office, next door to the New York Emporium.

"Now, Nellie, you wait!" he commanded, holding her jaw and placing half a ginger snap on her nose. Nellie waited until Jim took his hands away. She looked cross-eyed and puzzled at the ginger snap, turning over in her mind the problem with which she was confronted, considering the various methods by which it might be most efficiently solved. Finally she made a decision. She lowered her nose, the cookie fell to the ground and she gobbled it up, wagging her tail with no little satisfaction over her ingenuity.

"No, Nellie, that ain't the way," Jim explained.

Patiently he tried again with the same result. For three weeks he had been trying to teach her this trick that the fox terrier belonging to Henry Harper, the

station agent, had learned in a few minutes. But Nellie never could understand. And Jim never would give up, for he had made up his mind that if Henry Harper's insolent little dog could do it, Nellie certainly could. Jim was that kind. He had a blind faith in this mongrel that he loved, just as he had faith in all men who had ever been kind to him.

Using the same method, Jim fed Nellie all the ginger snaps. Then—with a promise, "I'll get you a present to-day, Nellie," he locked her in the granary and lumbered into the barn for the horse and wagon, the use of which Tom Wilkins, proprietor of the Palace Livery Barn, gave him on Sundays as part payment for his work as hack driver.

"Mornin', Jim," he offered.

"Hullo, Mister Wilkins," Jim answered mechanically, as he walked over to push out the wagon.

"Dynamitin'?" asked Wilkins, applying a soapy brush vigorously.

"Uh, huh!"

"Where at?"

"Kraus's."

"Kraus's!" Tom Wilkins exclaimed, wheeling. He shook the soapy brush at Jim. "Not with *my* wagon!"

Jim looked puzzled. "What's the matter?" he inquired.

"Ain't I told you not to have nothin' to do with that German? Ain't I told you not even to let him ride in the hack, not matter how much he offered you?"

"He don't want to ride in no hack. He's got a Ford," Jim explained patiently.

"That ain't the point. Ain't you never goin' to get in your head that we're in war? We're fightin' Germany, man!"

"Uh, huh. But I don't see that no good'll come of it."

"You make me sick! Germans is swine! And you're gettin' about as bad as they is. Just because you're a Swede you think you don't need to do nothin' for this country where you make your living. You and Kraus," he sneered, "you're Oskaloosa's aliens!"

"Kraus don't live in town," Jim answered, striving for accuracy. "He lives in the country."

"All right, then you're it all alone."

"Kraus, he's all right. I worked for him. He feeds his hands fine."

"He's got a pitcher of the Kaiser in his sittin' room! Know that? An' look how he drives into town an' sneers at the Red Cross an' laughs about our army an' says it serves folks right to get submarined if they ride on ships these times. Don't you know the whole town's off of Kraus?"

"I never knowed that. What for?"

In utter disgust and despair Tom threw his brush into the pail of water causing a big soapy splash that seemed to aid him in his inadequate efforts to express his feelings.

"He's a *German!*"

"Germans never done me no harm," Jim asserted doggedly. "I've knowed a lot. They never done me no harm an' I ain't goin' to interfere in this war. I believe in mindin' my own business. Anyway, if you're again' Kraus, why ain't you again' Binmeyer? He's a German."

"He's an American—got two sons in the American army. He hates Kraus like I do."

Jim couldn't understand. "I'm alien, an' Binmeyer ain't, an' Kraus is." He gave it up. "Anyway, I promised Kraus to do this job to-day."

"You can't use my horse an' wagon to work for a German!"

Jim looked around, bewildered. "I got all my stuff. I need the money. What'll I do?"

"Walk an' carry it, for all I'll help you." Tom fished out his brush and returned to his work.

"That's nigh onto four mile out there, Mister Wilkins," Jim pleaded. "I need the money."

"Money! What do you need money for?" Tom demanded.

"I—I promised," he hesitated, confused, "I promised Nellie," he said, his voice quavering, "I promised her I'd buy her a collar. She never had one, Mister Wilkins, and I promised her if she'd be a good dog. She was, Mister Wilkins, she was a good dog and now I've got to keep my promise."

"Arghh!" snarled Wilkins. "Walk and carry if you work for a German!"

Jim shut his teeth together, convulsively patted one fist with his open palm, then obediently picked up his tools and his packages and, shaking his head, shuffled out of the barn. He had promised Nellie; he had promised Kraus. He had to make good.

His walk carried him down toward the railroad tracks, past the White Diamond Elevator, a mammoth building that rapidly was being filled with the country's wheat, hundreds of loads, representing the entire wealth of the district. Though it was Sunday, there was great activity at the elevator. A long line of loaded wagons waited for a turn at the scales, and the farmers atop the wagons smoked their pipes and discussed the war and the price of wheat, the commodity that had given them more than life—that had taken them, their wives and their children out of a life of drudgery, that had given them bath rooms and electric lights and ice cream on Sundays and the inevitable Ford.

Into this elevator the country was putting its very existence, and the existence of bread-eaters of the allied nations.

A soldier with a rifle stopped Jim as he trudged along with his tools and his package of dynamite. The soldier was a member of the home guard and a dozen of them were scattered around the elevator.

"Where you going?" the soldier demanded.

"Hullo, Charley," Jim greeted "What's the matter?"

"Guarding the elevator. You're an alien. You can't come near it." Charley was not well instructed on the subject of the different sorts of aliens but he was taking no chances.

Jim was annoyed. "Why can't I walk where I want to?" he demanded.

"Got to protect the elevator."

"I walk where I like." He attempted to push past and found that he was urging his stomach unpleasantly into the point of a bayonet. He stopped. "I want to go over an' see if any of them farmers are drivin' back past Kraus's place. I want to ride with 'em."

"Kraus's!" the soldier exclaimed. "What you going to see Kraus for?" He scrutinized the packages that Jim carried.

"Dynamitin' stumps," Jim explained.

"You got *dynamite* in those packages!" The soldier turned and called for the sergeant. The sergeant was Billy Thompson, who knew Jim. The situation was explained.

"Go on and walk if you're going to work for that German!" Sergeant Thompson declared. "And be careful about how you come around this place with your dynamite! Beat it!"

And Jim turned, as ordered, and went shuffling down the dusty road that led into the country. It was a long journey and he wished he didn't have to make it. But to his primitive mind a promise was a promise, whether made to Nellie or to a German, and to him a promise in no way could be broken.

NELLIE was utterly disgusted with her new collar. To her it seemed to serve no useful purpose. It only chafed her and was so uncomfortable that it kept her awake when she wanted to sleep. But Jim was proud of it. He thought it made Nellie a dog more handsome than Henry Harper's fox terrier and he walked proudly into the railroad station the next morning, with Nellie at his heel's shaking her head impatiently and stopping every few steps to scratch at it with her front paws in an ineffectual attempt to remove it.

A crowd was around the little window through which Henry Harper sold tickets. Henry was leaning out, reading a letter he had just received from Jack Harper, his boy, who was in France. Jack was a light hearted, agreeable youngster, who to Jim had been nearer a friend than any other human being.

"Come up close, Jim," Henry snapped. "Here's something that may make you stop being a confounded pacifist."

Jim listened while Harper read Jack's descriptions of German atrocities, of mothers tortured, of babies maimed, of men and women enslaved.

Jim listened, his nose wrinkled in doubt.

"Now what do you think of Germans?"

Harper demanded when he had finished the letter.

"Did Jack see 'em?" Jim asked.

"No, but he's got the evidence."

"It ain't none of my business," Jim replied. "I don't believe it, anyway. Germans is no worse than others and I ain't got no quarrel with 'em. I can't see no use in war."

"But here is proof that Germans are killing babies! How would you feel if you were a mother and saw a big German stick a bayonet through your baby."

Jim thought a moment. It took some time for his slow mind to create the image.

"I'd cut his heart out," he said finally, as calmly as though he had made the statethat if it rained he would carry an umbrella. "But," he added, "I don't believe these things Jack writes about. Somebody's been lyin' to Jack."

A flood of abuse swept over him.

"You big bonehead!" Henry Harper raged.

"You're a pro-German!" shouted the baggage agent.

"All aliens ought to be interned," advised a travelling salesman.

The whistle of Number 64 stopped the discussion and the affair broke up that the train might properly be received.

All day, as he returned to meet each train, Jim was the subject of abuse. He was pitied for his ignorance, he was scorned for his lack of patriotism for the country in which he lived, his name was coupled with that of Kraus.

It was Kraus who saved Jim from being called more "fighting names," for when the German's name was brought up it drew all the fire from Jim. Kraus that afternoon had driven his car rattling through Main street, on his way to Missionville, where they were not so particular and where Kraus was welcome to buy and sell as he chose. It was reported that he had made a face at W. C. Compton, the banker, who had been obliged to jump lively to get out of the way of Kraus's car.

Some remarked that Kraus should be tarred and feathered and advised Jim that if he didn't mend his ways he might be included in the party. Jim ignored the insults and in the evening heard none of them, for he was busy with Nellie, who had protested so vigorously against the new collar that she had galled her neck with her claws. Jim had removed the ornament and conscience-stricken, was applying lard to the wound every few minutes.

While waiting for the 11.40 that night Jim had the station to himself. Henry Harper was at his desk working hard trying to frame telegrams to Omaha so persuasive that they would bring immediately a dozen freight cars to Oskaloosa to carry away the wheat that now filled the elevator to overflowing.

The 11.40 came and went, leaving no passengers for Jim. He wrapped Nellie in a blanket, took her in his arms and climbed on the seat, placing her beside him. Then he spoke to his horse and drove slowly away from the station. As he drove he upbraided himself for forçing Nellie to wear the collar that had injured her.

The road carried him past the White Diamond Elevator and by the light of the street lamps he saw two soldiers guarding it. It was silly, he thought. How could anybody steal wheat?

The guards were talking together under the electric light at the corner. They turned and watched Jim as he drove past.

"See anything of Luke Flinn or Jimmy Burr?" one called to him.

"Naw."

"If you do, tell 'em to hurry up. They were due to relieve us at midnight and they haven't shown up t," was the complaint from the first guard.

"Tell 'em we're not going to be suckers and do all the work," said the other.

"All right," grunted Jim. As he drove on he turned and looked back and saw the two had returned to their gossiping under the light.

"Huh," said Jim to himself, in disgust. "Fine guards, them fellows. Anybody could go up the alley and bore a hole in in the elevator and steal the whole mess without them seein'."

Jim reached the barn, put up his horse and carried Nellie a block to his home, which was a tiny, boarded-up room over

a repair shop. He placed Nellie carefully in a corner, applied more lard to her wounds, let her lick his hand in thanks, and started to undress.

He had unlaced only one shoe when he was startled by the clanging of the fire bell. He ran to his tiny window and looked out, but could see nothing unusual. He returned to his seat on the bed and began unlacing the other shoe but stopped when he heard men running past, shouting.

Jim sat thinking a moment, one shoe in his hands, the other on the floor. The fire bell began clanging again.

"Maybe it's the barn," he decided, and he dressed, said good-bye to Nellie and went out.

It was not the barn. It was the White Diamond Elevator. Flames were shooting out of the top and from every window. In vain were the feeble efforts of Oskaloosa's volunteer fire brigade. And Jim stood with all the rest of Oskaloosa, until almost daylight, watching the huge building, containing the result of the year's labor of the county's men, burn to a mass of black beams and smouldering wheat.

The federal agents who came from Omaha the next day said that some one had set the elevator on fire, that it had started in many places at once, and they found part of a clock and traces of fuse that indicated that some sort of bomb had been used to start the conflagration. It was the work of Germans, sent to Oskaloosa from some city, they guessed.

The guards, frightened white by the result of their careless watching, had no clues.

Jim heard all the gossip, but paid little attention to it. It was none of his business, this fire thing, and he hadn't given it much thought. He was too busy with Nellie, who was very ill indeed.

The two secret service men who remained in Oskaloosa made no progress with their investigation. Day after day passed and all they did was to ask questions. A terrible tragedy had come to the county and the county wanted action. The two weekly papers appeared with bitter editorials attacking the inefficiency of the government's men. The elevator was an utter wreck, the company could not pay and the farmers wanted revenge—of what sort they cared not.

The secret service men had jobs to keep and they looked about for a victim.

The process of elimination of suspects had narrowed the investigation to two persons whose patriotism could be questioned: Kraus, the pro-German, and Jim Carlson, the pacifist. The suave Kraus had been questioned and had established an alibi that satisfied the detectives, who were working blindly, without a shred of evidence.

Further cross-questioning of the guards brought out the fact that Jim had passed the elevator shortly before the fire. This was the first clue and the detectives tightened their belts and set to work.

When Jim drove to the station that evening the secret service men were loafing in the waiting room and they talked casually to him about the war. They stood close beside him when Henry Harper read to the crowd a new letter from Jack.

It told about an American boy who went into a trench captured from the Germans. The boy picked up a fountain pen he found in a dugout. He twisted the cap of the pen, there was an explosion and the boy's arm was blown off. It told about another soldier who picked up a German helmet, which evidently was attached to a bomb set off by the movement of the helmet. The boy's body was terribly torn by the explosion.

"The German fiends!" exclaimed one of the detectives. "We ought all to go to war this minute and wipe them out of existence, don't you think so?"

Jim shook his head. "I know Germans," he said stubbornly. "They're like other folks. I don't believe these things. I don't believe in war. What's the use?"

"That's queer," said the other detective. "All this recruiting, these fellows down at the post office that are getting men to enlist, the parade they're going to have Saturday of the Oskaloosa boys that have enlisted. Don't you believe in that?"

"What's the good?" said Jim. "They're goin' to kill Germans. I don't want to kill Germans. They treat me all right.

Why should this country go kill Germans? They never hurt me none."

One of the detectives was busy with his notebook and pencil as Jim spoke. There was a bustle as the coming of the train was announced. The detectives whispered together. One left hurriedly. The other spoke quickly to Jim.

"I want you to drive me around for about an hour, after the train comes in," he said.

"All right," Jim answered, sullenly. "Make it as short as you can, for my dog is sick—she's out in the hack now—and I want to get her home as soon as I can."

When Jim got home that night he was astonished to find that the lock of his little, shabby trunk had been broken. His things were all awry. He rushed to the drawer in which he kept his pocketbook. He found it, and sighed with relief. His four dollars had not been touched by the thief.

He quickly looked through his effects. Some of his dynamiting tools, wires and battery box, were missing.

He was bewildered by this strange state of affairs. It did not enter his mind that it had anything to do with the fact that one of the detectives had kept him away from his room for an hour by a strange desire to take an aimless evening drive through the town.

Nellie whined and moaned from her box in the corner.

"Never mind, Nellie," he said, holding up the pocketbook. "They didn't get this, and to-morrow it will pay for a doctor for you so you get well."

With two dollars in his pocket to pay the veterinarian, Jim stood on the curb of Main street and waited until the street was clear. Nellie struggled in his arms.

"Want to walk?" he asked. "All right. Come, Nellie, come."

The little mongrel trotted weakly behind her master as he started across the dusty street. They had almost reached the other side when a motor car swept around the corner. Jim jumped out of the way.

Nellie instinctively started down the street, yelping her fright, the motor car close behind her. The driver laughed, applied more speed and Nellie cried out in pain as two wheels passed over her little brown body and left her kicking feebly in the dust.

Jim ran to her and picked her twitching form up in his big arms. The man in the car stopped and looked around. It was Kraus.

"Quick!" cried Jim. "Take her to the doctor's."

"Nix," said Kraus. "Does this look like the Red Cross ambulance?"

Jim ran up to him and held out the body of Nellie. "Look what you did!" he moaned, tears beginning to fill his eyes.

"You big baby!" Kraus sneered. "You cry for a cur! That cur is dead! Did you see me get him? Some shooter, heh?" He laughed and went chugging away.

"You dir-ty German!" Jim stormed, and his face was as black as thunder.

All the hate in his big frame went into the words that came from between his clenched teeth. It was like a snarl of a wolf.

He stiffened. "You dirty German!" he repeated, and into his mind the word "German" brought memories of what he had heard, of babies slaughtered, of women maimed, of Belgium, of war tactics, of wild animals.

"You *German!*" he said again, and now the word took on a new meaning. It was a curse in itself. He watched until the murder car was lost in the dust far up the street. He turned quickly and carried his dead dog to the livery barn and buried her beside the granary.

The detectives called upon Tom Wilkins, proprietor of the Palace Livery Barn, that afternoon, to ask questions about Jim.

"He's quit," Mr. Wilkins told them. "Darn fool. Don't know what's wrong with him. His dog was killed this morning. Auto ran over it. He's all broke up about it and now he's quit. Says he won't ever work again. Queer duck. He's gone home."

The detectives thanked Mr. Wilkins and left.

"It looks as if we had the right bird. He's using that dog stuff as an excuse for

beating it," one said to the other. "We've got the goods on him—all that dynamite stuff and wires—but let's let him move. Trail him. He'll leave town and lead us to the gang that's back of him."

So they assured themselves that Jim was in his room and watched and waited.

Inside Jim was sobbing on his bed, waiting for night to come.

It was dark when he walked up the steps to the little porch in front of Kraus's farm house and knocked on the door. He stepped to one side as Kraus threw open the door and let a shaft of light penetrate the darkness.

Kraus stuck his head out. Two huge hands seized him by the throat, swung him off his feet and threw him head over heels down the steps. He landed in a heap on the ground and cried for help as he struggled to his feet.

Those two hands throttled him again, choked him into silence.

"You would, would you!" snarled Jim, shaking him. "You dirty German! I'll fix you so you'll never do it again!"

Jim pushed him away from him and sent a blow crashing to the German's chin. Kraus sank to the ground.

"I didn't do it," he whined. "I didn't do it!"

"You dirty liar! I saw you." Jim pulled him to his feet.

"Put up your hands, you coward! Fight! That's it! Now, there's another for you!" The blow, partly blocked by Kraus, sent him staggering back.

"I didn't do it," wept Kraus. "I was at home. Let me go! *Don't!*" Another blow sent him to the ground.

"I *saw* you, you dirty German! Don't lie to me! I *saw* you! And you'll never do it again. Stand up!"

Kraus rose to his knees. Blood was streaming down his face.

"You saw me? It was for the *Vaterland*. I pay you thousand dollars if you not tell. I admit I set the fire. It was for Germany. No one else saw me. You keep quiet. I pay you!"

"Fire!" exclaimed Jim. "To hell with the fire. You killed my dog! And you'll never kill anybody else's dog."

He reached down and lifted the writhing German, held him high over his head and pitched him as far as his strength could send the body. Kraus fell with a grunt, unconscious.

Two men stepped out of the bushes near by. They were the detectives. As they passed through the light shining from the open door, Jim recognized them. He threw back his shoulders.

"Well," he said, "you think you will arrest me?"

One of the detectives patted him on the shoulder. The other was inspecting the unconscious Kraus.

"Nope. You did a neat little job." He turned to the other detective. "How is he, Bill?"

"He's coming to," Bill answered with regret in his voice.

"You're all right," the first detective said to Jim. "You dug up the bird that set the elevator on fire. You come with us to Omaha and you'll get part of the reward."

"Omaha?"

"Yep. And we'll see that you get your job back, all right."

"I don't want to go to Omaha," Jim said slowly. "I don't want my job back."

The detective tried to comfort him. "That'll be all right about your dog. You'll forget it."

Jim shook his head. He looked down, opened his hands wide and clenched his fists. "To-morrow," he said in a low tone, "to-morrow I enlist."

A HIRED GALLANT

By FLORENCE MARTIN EASTLAND

This story was published in the Black Cat in November 1908. It is reprinted by request.

A WOMAN, however unattractive to men, may sometimes reverse the condition, if honest enough to admit the fact and sufficiently clever in devising ingenious methods of accomplishment.

So reasoned Jessie Rogers, a school teacher by choice and a spinster by accident. Nothing short of an accident could consign a loving heart and a domestic disposition to a companionless fireside.

She rose rather suddenly from the couch where she had been thinking intently and, crossing the room, studied her plain face in the mirror.

"I am homely," she sighed, "but that should not prevent my enjoying life. Certainly my preponderance of gray matter ought to steer my bark into more exciting channels than endless grade-work, teachers' meetings and institutes. 'Ay, there's the rub:' I cannot man my bark. Not that I want the man really—I know how to steer," she added quickly; "but I would like his attention—his services. I want to be able to say, with the important air of the giddiest girl who teaches only for money to buy new clothes, 'I am going out this evening.' I want to exult in the knowledge that such a statement will not mean an engagement with several of my kind—respectable, conventional and dull. In fact, why should I evade the truth?—I'm tired of being permanently shelved without a display at all and I want to come down on the counter just to see if some one, no matter who, with a 'Here's something nice,' will not haul me out from behind the fresher, gayer stock."

She paused in the act of smoothing back an unruly strand of hair. Impulsively she picked out the pins and soon a fluffy crown replaced the plainer coiffure. From some drawer she unearthed a brilliant comb, a present from a pupil whose lack of taste she had deplored.

"There," she observed as she adjusted it and cocked her head to obtain the effect, "that isn't a bad beginning. To continue my metaphor, I am now brushed up and ready for a bargain tag. You know," she continued, addressing the face in the glass, "that you, by fun-killing economy, have saved a thousand against that day, some time distant yet, thank heaven! when you will become a back number in your profession and a regular patron of a neurotic specialist." Her wholesome laugh was a negation. "Now, if it takes every cent, you've got to do it. You are going to gratify your inclinations once."

Seizing a pencil she wrote steadily for a little, read what she had written, and tore it up. Again she applied herself, with the same unsatisfactory result. At last she read the written product doubtfully, put on her hat at an unaccustomed angle and sought a downtown business block. Before the door lettered "Robert Bradbury, Attorney at Law," she halted with a conscious air of doing something freakish. A little flush covered her sallow cheek as she passed into the office and greeted the lawyer.

"So glad to see you, Jessie," he exclaimed as he placed a chair. "Going out home with me for dinner? We have been wondering what had become of you."

"Thank you—not to-day." She hesitated a little while the flush deepened. "I—I came to consult you about this."

She took the paper from her bag and with a nervous laugh tossed it on his desk.

Astonishment rounded Mr. Bradbury's mouth and lifted his heavy lids.

"Why, Jessie! Do you mean this really?"

"Certainly," was the spirited answer. "There is nothing improper in hiring an escort when a woman cannot attract one, and society and custom unite in frowning upon her going about unattended. I am willing to pay ten dollars per week for a young man of good character and refinement to attend me three evenings out of the seven. It is simply a business arrangement. Will you, or will you not, insert that advertisement, act as my agent, and look up references if any persons respond?"

"Of course I will—gladly, too. The novelty of the idea rather startled me, but in the light of a business affair, I am not opposed to it. Any restrictions about love-making?"

"There won't need to be any. I can manage that—I always have," she finished ruefully.

Several days elapsed before she received a message from Mr. Bradbury requesting her to come to his office. From the flood of applicants who evinced Barkis-like inclinations he had selected two, either of whom met all requirements. He described both as correct in appearance and with excellent references; but, if there were a choice, he would incline toward Lindsay Morris, who was somewhat older and a member of a dancing club.

"Engage him," decided Jessie instantly, "but give me the address of the other in case of need. Be explicit in saying to Mr. Morris that his check will be sent at the end of each week and that I desire him to avoid mentioning to me that there is a business understanding between us. At any time he wishes to terminate the contract he can do so through you. One thing more: he must not take me to such expensive places of entertainment that he cannot save half the weekly check. I will consider church-going, lectures and calling, with an occasional dance or attendance at the theatre ample return for my investment. I know this is a departure for me from a time-honored program," she explained half-apologetically, half-defiantly, "but I am tired of sitting alone in poky boarding-houses and occupying an elevated mental plane. I have enlarged so many youthful characters I want to try an experiment on my own before it ossifies. I am going to learn to dance," she further contributed.

The next evening Jessie was called to the parlor by an unusual event. A gentleman had sent up his card. With inward perturbation she read his letter of introduction from Mr. Bradbury and paid a silent yet fervent tribute to the lawyer's ability in selecting an escort.

Lindsay Morris was indeed all that could be desired—courtly, attentive, entertaining. The time passed delightfully, and when Jessie ran to her mirror to confide to her reflection the brilliant success of her plan, she was amazed to find herself transformed. Animation lent color to her complexion and brightened her dull eyes. Excitement contributed an alertness of expression quite new to her, while the security of her independence gave a dash of becoming recklessness.

"How well he did it," she chuckled. "Almost did I forget there was a business arrangement when he requested the honor of my company to the dance Wednesday evening. I believe I will take a private dancing lesson to-morrow after school."

Which she did, further decimating her bank acount through the addition of some furbelows to her modest wardrobe—a reckless extravagance over which she gasped when she figured the sum total, but experienced no regret.

The club dance was a most enjoyable affair, to Jessie at least, whose dancing improved under Morris's patient tutelage. Although evidently popular, his attentions to Jessie were as punctilious as though no weekly check were forthcoming. Through him she met every man in the room; and with secret satisfaction she saw nothing to indicate that their courtesies to her were suggested. They left her not a dull moment. The scheme was certainly working beautifully.

On Friday evening her escort took her to the theater. He had chosen excellent

seats and between the acts Jessie was pleased to recognize a few friends and acquaintances, who bestowed upon her and her companion a second curious glance. She was glad they saw Morris, if they did wonder how he came to be with her, for he was a man to be proud of. After the play he proposed supper at a café.

"But that would cost too much," objected Jessie. "Under the agreement—"

"I beg your pardon," stiffly interrupted Morris. "Did you mention agreement?"

His commanding air brought forth a stammered apology from Jessie, who meekly accompanied him to the cafe, where she thought to punish him with a lavish order; but he evinced no surprise, even proposing some expensive additions. On Saturday, however, when the first check was due Morris, she drew it for fifteen dollars instead of ten, and gave it to the postman in the morning. Shortly after luncheon a messenger brought her a five dollar check signed by Lindsay Morris. No mention of the occurence was made when he took her to church Sunday evening, and Jessie enjoyed this exciting little by-play.

The program was varied the succeeding week by a concert, a call on a friend they discovered they had in common, and a dinner at a new hotel. To Jessie one of the delights of the situation was that no suggestions came from her. There was such a pleasure in wondering what he would next propose, and it always proved more enjoyable than anything she could have thought of.

Early in the third week, when he came merely to spend the evening, he encountered another caller, who was introduced as Mr. Howerton. Another teacher in the house was called into the parlor and the four played bridge. Jessie managed to conceal her pleasure when Morris reminded her, as he rose to go, of the dance Wednesday—and also a little later, when Mr. Howerton, taking his departure, asked permission to accompany her to the play the following night. On both occasions other men dropped in unexpectedly and she had to be excused in order to keep her engagement.

"Men are just like sheep," she laughed as she put away her new evening gown. "I might have sat here forever before one got inside the fence if I hadn't let down the bars; but with one in, the rest are eager to follow."

It was not surprising that she became popular. The terms of her contract lent her assurance. Men sought her society and she grew prettily independent and exacting. The sudden appreciation was wine to her intellect, which shone with unsuspected brilliance. Her admirers forgot her plainness. She was dependent upon Morris no longer; indeed, she went out almost as frequently with Mr. Howerton, a younger man, of fine appearance.

A month passed quickly in this new and rejuvenating atmosphere. Jessie was in such demand by Morris, Mr. Howerton, or some other representative of the once mole-eyed sex, that she found scant time for the course of study she had planned. At school she was obliged to utilize every spare moment during intermissions to keep up with the work. Sometimes she had a guilty feeling that she was not doing her duty when her enjoyments lulled all desire to worry over John Smith's moral development or Mary Jones's frivolity. She regarded a happy smile and some of her excess flowers and bonbons now and then as a plain shirking of her obligations; but perhaps John Smith, with a smelly rose on his coat-lapel, and Mary Jones, sampling Huyler's best, were as greatly benefited after all. She began to experience a comfortable feeling that the characters of the future mothers and fathers were not altogether dependent upon her training. And her callers multiplied.

One evening when Morris came to take Jessie to a lecture he found Mr. Howerton there before him.

"There appears to be a mistake," smiled Jessie, who could not appear surprised at the outcome of her plans, "for which I must be responsible. I find I have promised to go with both of you. I will telephone a friend near by to go with us. You don't mind calling for her, do you, Mr. Morris?"

"Certainly not," he returned, but added as he followed her to the telephone in the

hall, "but if I am not violating a rule"—with a darkening of his brows—"may I ask if my duties include—"

"They do," replied Jessie promptly.

His manner toward her friend was faultless—he exhibited no trace of annoyance—yet he bade Jessie good-night with no reference to a future engagement. This was the entrance of the serpent into Jessie's Eden, and she taxed herself with having played double and fell asleep with a suspicious moisture on her cheek.

For two days Morris did not appear. Jessie was so miserable that she, for the first time, could not enjoy a concert with Mr. Howerton. She was fretful and impatient and bade fair to find herself as devoid of cavaliers as she had once been. She scolded herself soundly before the mirror.

"To think," she observed scathingly, "that you could not abide by a business contract. When things were progressing so well you must let sentiment interfere and lead you to a silly, childish act like that. Why couldn't you let well enough alone? No; you must feign a preference for some one you know doesn't care a straw about you, of course, just to—oh, dear! he will never come back, and he is worth all the rest."

A big tear rolled down the cheek in the mirror before her face, heavy with grief, dropped to the reflected slender arm on the dressing-table.

Her prediction of Morris's defection appeared verified on the succeeding morning, when a messenger sent by Mr. Bradbury arrived with Morris's formal resignation. He merely expressed regret that his services were no longer needed.

"At least," commented Jessie, "*he* was able to regard it simply as a business matter. I wish I had—or else not gone into business so extensively." Which was an admission she would not have made even to her reflected face if her plan had continued working along prescribed lines.

Everything went wrong the following day. Restless and nervous, she was unable to sleep until almost dawn, and awoke too late for breakfast. She tore her coat as she hurried into the school building two minutes late, with the rebuking eyes of the principal upon her.

"That probably means a fine," she said.

Her pupils were trying, and the day seemed interminable. Not so far distant just then rose the vision of the nerve-tinker. But possessing a perfect-working liver she grew more hopeful after she had excused herself to Mr. Howerton after dinner and summed up the situation.

"Dear me!" she reflected in the privacy of her apartment, "I need not blame my plan. The results exceeded my anticipations. I lost my head, that's all—no; it isn't, you goose, and you know it. If that were all, the damage could be repaired by an apology and a resumption of official duties."

She was perilously near tears again, but pulled herself together determinedly.

"Don't waste your time in vain regrets, foolish one," she admonished. "Take your medicine bravely. Smile now. There! that's better. Now don't let me see you crying for the unattainable again—only Paradise looked so dear," she concluded with a pathetic little droop to her mouth.

She rose briskly, put on a becoming house-gown, a recent acquisition, and tried to pin her attention to grading examination papers. Her pencil strayed and she was vexed to find herself gazing sentimentally at a virile face she had neatly executed at the end of a composition on "Domestic Animals," while murmuring tenderly.

"He has a firm, shapely mouth and such frank eyes."

Hurriedly she walked to the window and stood staring into the darkness. When she sat down again she leaned back in her chair with arms above a smiling face.

"Why should I try to conceal my joy?" she reasoned. "It is something I have not sought and a secret I must not betray; but it warms and fills those dull, tenantless chambers of my soul and fires my placid blood. I am happier with it hidden in my heart than I ever was before. It endows me in an hour with a keener, more sympathetic knowledge of life's meaning than I could have acquired through years of erudition. Instead of prudishly shutting my eyes to its existence, I will cherish it, gloat over it, expand through it. Yes,"

she nodded as her eye fell on the drawing, "I will even gratify my eyes by an expression of it, although I shall be careful to avoid such publicity as that."

In an exalted state of mind Jessie erased her pencil's lapse and applied that object to its legitimate use. The last paper was marked when she was summoned to the telephone.

Her heart fluttered as she recognized the voice inquiring for Miss Rogers. Her quavering "Yes" was to her such a betrayal of relief and joy that she demanded sharply, "To whom am I speaking?" Even under strong excitement her prepositions fell into their right places. The rules of grammar, beneath the pressure of constant expounding, had been shredded, double-pulverized and rubbed in.

After a little she hung up the receiver and with a springy step and an elevated head ascended the stairs to add some touches to her toilet. When she entered the shabby parlor she wore an opera cloak, one of the aforesaid furbelows.

"Going out?" inquired a sister teacher who was yawning over "The Application of Froebelism."

"Yes."

"Rather late, isn't it?" her interlocutor persisted.

"A little supper," explained Jessie, wondering, when the other sniffed significantly, if she could divine that it meant the small company of two.

The bell ringing at that moment, Jessie fastened her cloak and arranged the gauzy scarf on her head before she opened the door. She did not admit the caller, but after a brief conversation, joined him.

It was not rather late, but decidedly so, when Jessie returned. Morris followed her into the deserted parlor, where under the dim gaslight, he kissed her with an air of proprietorship before he asked:

"May I come to-morrow evening, dear?"

She blushed as she answered archly:

"I have an engagement with Mr. Howerton. It will be the last."

"The next evening, then," begged Morris, who, after receiving a favorable reply, continued musingly: "I am under immense obligations to Howerton. Without him I should never have screwed my courage to the point of terminating a wholly delightful business contract in order to prosecute an unpromising courtship. I could see how much in earnest Howerton was" —Jessie smiled indulgently—"and it drove me to desperation to have my admiration and attentions accepted as a matter of business. I cannot understand," he went on after a short, well-filled pause, "why you, surrounded by so many admirers, should take it into your dear head to pay for an escort."

"For novelty," was the truthful reply. "Wasn't that your motive also?"

Morris's affirming laugh was less hearty and not so prolonged, but his farewell partook of both qualities in a greater degree. To her glorified face in the mirror the happy woman held up a warning finger before she doubled over in silent merriment.

Punctual to the moment Mr. Howerton appeared the ensuing evening. The people of the house had so often taken themselves off when Jessie's callers came that it appeared to have been a private agreement to discontinue the custom. They lounged about reading or writing—and listening, as Jessie vexedly felt. A few minute's conversation with her visitor was all she needed. She wanted the rest of the time to answer a lovely letter from Lindsay. Her restlessness communicated itself to Mr. Howerton, who proposed a walk.

"Was that right?" he inquired when they reached the pavement.

"Exactly. I have something to say to you which I am not yet ready to tell them. I am going to be married to Lindsay Morris—"

"I suspected as much."

"And I want to assure you how greatly I appreciate your past kindness and courtesy. Under the circumstances—" she hesitated and he laughingly completed the sentence:

"Of course our business relations are at an end."

THE JUNGLE MAN

By H. P. HOLT

Many go up the Amazon—human flotsam unable to withstand the suction; but Benson is drawn by neither the mystery of the jungle nor the promise of gold. He goes in search of a man named Schmidt, who owes him something.

THE tide was out. Vultures were picking at stuff under the bilge of an ancient hulk. A naked negress, whose girth must have been six feet, was cooling her hulk in the sea and playing like a rhinoceros, with two brown little children. The sun was beating down like a hungry furnace with that especial fervor it reserves for the benefit of people who dwell in Para.

A mosquito sat on my hand as I, in turn, sat on a sun-baked stone. I smote him fiercely and he died. You get to know something interesting about mosquitoes when you have lived three thousand miles south-east of Coney Island for a while. That was a yellow fever mosquito. One becomes lax at Para about everything, from one's language to one's linen, excepting only the slaying of mosquitoes.

Behind me stretched the illimitable jungle with its dark secrets—about a continent of it. I was lighting my pipe and dreaming of Broadway, and the human ants thereon, when an odd figure came near: a man, dressed in a shirt, a battered pith helmet, torn trousers, and boots that laced nearly up to his knees. He put out a hand for my matches, and I saw he had his baggage, the size of two cigar boxes, slung over his shoulder.

"It's good to be—to be where there's folks about," he said slowly, as though speech came with difficulty after long silence. His face was utterly expressionless; his mouth worked like a ventriloquist's automaton.

I glanced round. The Negress was still there, and her two children. Half a mile away one or two men were moving lethargically, or appeared to be moving.

"Yes. Just so." I said, mildly surprised, and moved slightly on the hot stone, partly for comfort and partly to make room. You talk to people at Para without an introduction if they have white skins. "Been in there?" I jerked my head toward the jungle.

"I'm from St. Louis," he replied, as though he had just popped out of a subway from Missouri. But I knew he was answering with subconscious caution, which faded a moment later. "Yes," he went on, "I've been in there."

I wondered at his set face. Emotion seemed to have dried up within him. I remember there was a tiny wart over his left eyebrow. His eyes were steel grey and alive—the only thing about him that was really alive. Also there were teeth marks on the toe of one of his boots. He saw my gaze fixed wonderingly on the scarred leather, but either he had forgotten how the marks came to be made, or was not sufficiently interested to explain. Queer things happen "in there."

"Been back long?" I asked, with the object of stirring him up, yet knowing he must have arrived that day. But he ignored the question. His eyes, which had to be somewhere, were fixed on the rim of the porcelain sky away on the horizon where it merged into the shimmering rind of the sea. A minute, or maybe five, passed.

"Just arrived, an hour or two ago," he said, suddenly, after the fashion of a clock that, having stopped, had been rewound. Time, evidently, had ceased to count for him. Another striped yellow fever mosquito had subsided on his hand and was starting to dig. I felt it would

be presumptuous to mention what I knew about that mosquito to a man whose boot bore those marks of jungle brutishness. I watched the insect, fascinated. By and by it was brushed aside. "They serve good food at Casseo dining room." the man added.

"Doubtless you were hungry," I replied. Two people who had died of ptomaine poisoning in Para within a month had taken their meals regularly at the Casseo dining room. "You in the rubber trade?"

His automatic mouth opened, and as automatically closed with a click, shutting in an unuttered reply. The lids half closed over his steely eyes, which became the brighter as he relapsed into thoughtfulness. The solid wall of the primeval forest's edge stood two hundred yards away, flanking a world of mystery beyond. The man gazed at it a while.

"There's something queer about that jungle," he said slowly, impressively, "something—well, you can feel it though you cannot define it. There is something waiting there always, just as there was a thousand years ago. The whole forest is waiting. It isn't malaria, or beri-beri, or blackwater fever that men dread when they go into it; and no man enters the Amazon forest without tasting that nameless fear. God, or the devil, knows what it is they do dread."

This granite-faced stranger was stirring in me a degree of interest to which I had become unfamiliar.

"But," I said, "men need not go in."

"I must," he replied simply, yet with an air of finality not to be questioned. "In there"—and he waved an arm indicating the entire Brazilian jungle, from Peru to Para—"there are many men, white men, fathers of families, with women waiting somewhere like the jungle waits, men who would cry, if they still knew how to cry, at the touch of their own youngsters' hands. And they must stay, for various reasons, though sane men living sane lives would tell you such talk was folly." He lighted a cigar with the air of a connoisseur. Have you ever noticed that you can detect a man's breeding by the way he handles a cigar? A *nouveau riche* Chicago pork packer lights it quite differently from the way his son will a generation later.

"Are you going to remain a while in Para?" I asked.

"Till this cigar is finished," he replied with decision I should hardly have anticipated.

"Then you are going to catch a boat, or are you going back 'in there?'" I asked.

For one whole second he turned his eyes to mine. They pierced through and through me, but apparently he saw I had no interest in the matter save that of idle curiosity.

"Pardon me, but as you have just come out of the jungle I naturally assumed—"

"I'm going back into the jungle—rather a long way in," he said.

"Well, you have fifteen minutes," I glanced at his cigar. "That's my bungalow over there. My name is Magnus. I'm a shipping agent in Para—for my sins. Come to the cracked ice and tumblers."

We sat on the veranda. My companion sipped half his highball and then forgot its existence. Only when I mentioned that one of the rubber trade boats was due down the Amazon from Borba the following day did he show animation. And for a moment the effect of my simple statement was electric.

"That—that must be the first boat from Borba for some time," he said jerkily.

"About three months."

Perhaps I imagined it, but the wart over his eyebrow seemed to turn a darker, reddish hue. Otherwise his face was impassive again instantly.

"How long will the next boat from here be?"

"Maybe three months," I replied, wondering vaguely.

"I—I spoke in error," he said, lighting another cigar. "I must not go back until to-morrow."

One acts on curiously unreasoned motives occasionally. There are hotels, of a kind, in Para; and yet I asked him to spend the night in my home. For the first time I saw some quality of human feeling glimmer in his face. It was fleeting and odd, but unmistakable. Hospitali-

ty is an unknown quantity from the mouth of the Amazon inward.

He told me his name was Benson, and I found that his knowledge of things and places was greater than one might have expected. Paris was one of his treasured memories; he fell upon some book of poems in Greek and fingered it lovingly. Next day he was on the landing stage five hours before the Borba boat arrived. Only two niggers and a shivering, fever ridden rubber official came by it. Borba is not a health resort.

A river steamer, going a little distance up the Amazon, was to sail in the evening. That would do for a start, Benson said. He sat on the veranda, awaiting evening. In the last fifteen minutes he spoke of himself and the jungle, coldly, dispassionately.

"There were two of us left twiddling our thumbs at one of those clearings in the interior when the company went smash. I was new to it, and at first didn't realize that because a few Wall Street magnates gambled, human beings could be left up there to die. But they were; and they died—the colored ones, I mean. I had signed on for three years, after fixing a date for my wedding. Three years didn't seem long, when I signed on. There was a German with me at the time the smash arrived. His name was Adolph Schmidt. A prospecting party on a river boat rescued us, pretty near the finish. I asked Schmidt if he would like to go on above Borba where there was said to be gold. We went. Perhaps you've heard about the upper reaches of the Amazon tributaries. The details aren't edifying. We went five hundred miles beyond Borba—or maybe six hundred. Whenever there was a chance we went ashore looking for gold. Then we got lost. There was a hill, and we climbed that to look for the river, and we found nuggets in the bed of a stream—"

He broke off and drummed his fingers on the arm of the chair.

"Neither of us thought we should live to get down to the sea again as the stream ran in the wrong direction, but we gathered a lot of those nuggets—yes, a lot. I don't know how it happened, but we found a canoe, too, and we started down the river. About a week later, while we were ashore looking for something to eat, Schmidt's revolver went off. Maybe—anyway he left me. There were quite a lot of nuggets in the canoe, and more to be picked up in the place where we had got them. Perhaps Schmidt's revolver went off accidentally, though I don't know why it should have. Nor do I know why he mistook me for a corpse—if he did. He must have known I wasn't dead."

Benson was silent for a few moments.

"It was only a graze on the temple," he went on, "and when I became conscious again I was alone. I ate unnamable things. Once, I remember, it was a great butterfly. Eventually—I don't know how long afterwards—I came to a clearing where blacks were gathering their eternal rubber, and one of them took me part of the way downstream in a canoe. I wanted to ask Schmidt why his revolver went off; but I haven't seen him—yet. He had to come here, or go to Macapa, when he got to the mouth of the Amazon, and I guessed it would be Para, because it seems there was a woman waiting somewhere for him, too, and he spoke of letters that were being sent here for him. But he hasn't arrived; the letters have not been called for. He has stored the gold somewhere and doubled back for another load. Now you see why the jungle calls me."

There was neither heat nor enthusiasm in his voice. There was a thing that had to be done, just as water must flow downward.

"But," I protested, "the odds against your finding him are enormous."

His face cracked. It was not a smile. Something happens to a man before he loses his power to smile.

"He has gone back," Benson said. "Therefore I shall return, after him."

And then he left the quasi civilization of Para, with his five pounds of baggage, his frozen face, and a supply of quinine. I heard afterwards from the Brazilian captain of the river steamer that he had transferred to another boat bound upstream. And then the mystery of the

jungle closed down on him. Others went up the Amazon—human flotsam unable to withstand the suction. Benson had been an incident only. The Brazils swallowed him up whole, leaving no trace; even memories fade quickly in that region. Ships, months and men came and went while Para stewed. A year passed before I found myself facing a figure that seemed oddly familiar. Benson, a good deal older, had a yellow tinge to his skin.

"That letter you left with me—I mailed it three days ago," I said, as soon as he was seated in my private office.

"I'm too late then, eh? Pity. Has the boat it is on sailed?"

"Not yet. They're waiting for a consignment of rubber."

"Good," said Benson with a touch of satisfaction. "I can get to New York as soon as the letter, then."

"Did you—did you find your partner?" I asked.

"Yes. He had doubled back," Benson replied. "I knew he would. You can get the measure of a man sometimes. He was delayed at Borba by malaria. I found that out afterwards when I came through there. He must have hidden the gold we found. Anyway he went back without it, and I have not been able to find any trace of it.

"He must have gone alone," Benson added. "I guess he was afraid if he took any niggers they would murder him as soon as they saw what he was after. Niggers know gold when they see it nowadays and—well, they're pretty primitive. I found his canoe drawn up on the river bank. From there the trail wasn't easy, but I found the place, as he had done. He had a sort of camp on the hill. I saw the camp, but I couldn't see anything of him at first. Then I found him."

Benson knocked the ask of his cigar off with grave precision.

"He must have tied himself into a writhing knot—ten different kinds of a knot," he went on. "There was a look on his face that showed me—he hadn't enjoyed it."

"Dead?" I asked.

Benson nodded.

"You've seen those pretty little necklace snakes, eh? There was one lying by his side. He'd had the satisfaction of killing it before—well, you know how a man dies after a necklace snake has bitten him."

"I am afraid," I said, breaking the silence that followed, "you have only wasted a year."

Benson shook his head slowly.

"If he had got away from South America, God only knows where I should have had to follow him."

"By the way—naturally I'm interested, you know—did you find any more gold there?" I asked.

"Oh yes," Benson replied dully. "He had gathered up all one could hope to get without machinery and things. I fetched it away, but my canoe upset coming back, and I lost it."

"So, now you're going back to New York."

He looked at me absently.

"One must go somewhere," he replied. "My original three years' contract would nearly have expired by now. Funny, isn't it, how little you know of what is waiting round the corner for you! I—I was to have been married, too."

"Well, why not?"

He waved his hand, in dismissal of the thought.

"That is what she says," he replied. "I got her letters this afternoon. When the company went smash I offered her her freedom again, but she wouldn't have it. Maybe I'll be able to fix up some new contract for another year or so, and then, perhaps—"

"You did mention the name of your partner when last I saw you, but I made no special note of it," I said. "Who was he?"

"Adolph Schmidt, and da—— no, he is already damned. The jungle saw to that."

I scribbled a note and rang for one of the clerks. Soon afterwards a man came in with what I had sent for.

"Look at the address on that box," I said.

" 'Adolph Schmidt, care of the Para Shipping Company, Para. Hold until called for.' " Benson read.

"It came down from Borba by a river steamer," I explained. "Now, if Schmidt is dead and you were his partner—"

Benson was on one knee, prying the lid of the box open with his knife. Neither of us spoke until he got to the contents.

"The—nuggets!" he exclaimed, and I noticed that his fingers were shaking. "He must have shipped the stuff down here from Borba before he doubled back."

"You said something about fixing up some new contract for a year or so—."

Suddenly his face changed. A look that was thoroughly human came into his eyes, at the side of which wrinkles appeared. Lines that had formed in the long ago and been twisted out of shape "in there" came into being again at the side of his mouth. A broad smile was spreading over his face.

"Yes, I'm going to sign a contract," he said, his hand going instinctively to a bundle of letters which bulged in his pocket. "But it won't be a business contract. When do you say that New York boat sails?"

THE NOVEMBER NUMBER

CALL IT A DAY *by Frederick J. Jackson* introduces Big Dog and Little Dog, surname Smith. They are brothers by adoption and gentlemen of active temperament. Life for them is one grand musical comedy, and this tale is a mere fragment reciting the events of a single day, when they give an exhibition of their teamwork to the inhabitants of Tres Picos. After gloriously defeating the town terror, they meet the enemy's shock troops and get the shock of their lives. The story includes the twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses of their favorite, and strictly private, topical song. Words and music by Little Dog.

TRIANGULAR FINANCE *by A. L. Crabb* is a tale of a five-dollar "touch." It relates in detail how Messrs. John Brown, Hot Air Lutes and Dude Sweeney undertake a feverish campaign for funds in anticipation of the expense attendent upon the annual boat excursion of the Hilltop Academy student body.

THE CRIME OF MR. FIGG *by Weare Holbrook* is an account of the nocturnal activities of an indignant ghost. The dramatis personæ include a bill collector, a stone cutter, and the ghost of the late Dr. Constantine Blessing of Dowe College, author of Blessing's Greek Grammar.

The Black Cat Club

WITH this number the prize contests which have been conducted for the past two years are discontinued. For some time it has been apparent that members have been gradually losing interest in short-story criticism, due in many cases to the increasing demands of war work of one kind or another. Of the thousand or more members, less than ten per cent have been active all the time. Some members have sent in their criticisms one month and have not been heard from again for three or four months, while others have stopped sending in criticisms because they have never been able to win prizes. Thus instead of one thousand criticisms there have been actually less than one hundred from which to select the prize winners; and the number has been steadily decreasing until, at the present time, the awarding of prizes has come to be less of a task than making up the published criticism of the stories.

Omitting the Club as a feature of the BLACK CAT may be only temporary. A great deal depends upon the volume of protest received after this number is in the hands of the readers. The editors realize that is is something of a task to write a criticism of the stories every month, especially at a time when there are so many things of more importance to be done, and believe that if there is to be any appreciable renewal of activity on the part of the members, it can best be tested after the war is over and Germany is left with a very small piece of raw beefsteak to cover a very large case of "traumatic conjunctivitis."

Announcement of the prize winners in the August and September contests will appear in the November and December numbers. The following members were awarded prizes for their criticisms of the July number: Mrs. Ada Evans, Omaha, Nebr.; Mrs. John R. Powell, St. Louis, Mo.; Miss Harriette Wilbur, Duluth, Minn.; Augustin W. Breeden, Calhoun, La.; Mrs. Leora Tuttle, Spokane, Wash.; G Lombard Kelly, Asheville, N. C.; Edward B. Fenn, Meriden, Conn.; Henry K. Cohen, Bronx, N. Y.; Miss Rose Abeling, San Francisco, Cal.; Frank G. Davis, Richmond, Va.; Pendleton P. Karr, Washington, D. C.; Mrs. Mildred H. Comfort, Stillwater, Minn.; Mrs. Grace Kerwin, Manchester, N. H.; Miss Sadie M. Whitney, Potomac, Mont.; W. A. Sternberg, Tacoma, Wash.; Miss Bessie Loesges, Riverside, Ills.; Mrs. E. J. Stroud, Kansas City, Mo.

The Little Maverick is the story of a mad-cap girl who demands the liberties of a man and the privileges of a woman at one and the same time, and gets them. It is an unusual love story for the BLACK CAT, unusual because the affection is as prominent as the action. In fact, the action centers about the affection, while the BLACK CAT usually chooses to have the relation reversed. The love of Jerry and Ricky is a matter of the heart, whereas in most BLACK CAT stories, the love is a matter of the head—a bump produced by the author's firmly bringing the two wooden heads of his characters into close contact. In spite of characters that have been worn threadbare as types, the story has charm. Several things contribute to its success: the deep humanness of Ricky and Jerry, the author's evident delight in telling a good story, and her Harry Leon Wilsonic way of bringing in ludicrous details, as the "3,459, flies." The introduction is good. The drummer, though he does not appear again, serves his purpose in giving us a vivid picture of Ricky's person and character. The review of her past life, which follows, is a weak spot in the story. In it there is material for another story, and its use here to further reveal the girl's character postpones more than is necessary the real story, which does not begin until Ricky is seized with the mining fever. But whatever the technical faults of the story as they appear to the amateur or professional eye, the author has pointedly done one thing—she has put life into her characters. They are far from being lay figures.

The Near-Brother is another of Mr. Pitt's stories of setting and atmosphere and compares favorably in style and descriptive power with his previous stories. The near-brothers are really too "near" to be convincing. It is easily possible that Napoleon might bring home the ham, untouched, to his starving master; but could he reason out in his doggish mind that money was what his master really needed and so lead him to the buried treasure? Even those who sympathize with Bill Donald in his poverty and desolation have their elemental sense of right shocked at the bald statement that he found the gold, and quite evidently intended to keep it. The poor farm is not a sufficient spector of persecution to make the reader accept this action as right. Not only is the ending highly improbable in itself, but it is wrenched out of shape in order to make it a happy one. It is amusing to note that Bird Warden Bill Donald is such a "near-brother" to Butterfly Tom that even the editor mistook them for twins.

The House on Chester Street is a story that strikes a responsive chord in the heart of any person who has ever revisited the home of his youth. Every reader can sympathize fully with the contending emotions and natural depression of the man visiting again the scenes of his childhood. There is no sensation quite like the pleasure that is three parts pain, and the author describes it from his heart. The references to the red-headed boy are particularly enjoyable, for his discovery that "all houses and streets and distances seemed strangely dwarfed" is universal. The fine study in retrospection and introspection which opens the story lifts it from the commonplace, but the story weakens perceptibly toward the end. The death of Mother Carley is useless slaughter. The author could have spared her without changing the course of the story. The fire would have permitted Converse to adopt her too, and her death becomes a needless horror. The story is a difficult but very fine piece of imaginative work. The author worked it out in every detail before he left it as finished. It is true to life more than any other story in the number, and the characters are more nearly normal.

The Price of Hate is a new form of the revenge theme, full of atmosphere and plenty of temperament. It excells in technique and descriptive passages, and the action is original and entertaining. It is told in the first person, which is best for this kind of tale, as the feeling of it lies more in the breast of the teller than in actuality. The contrast is good between the dramatic relation of the tragic loss, through treachery, of a fortune of pearls, and the nonchalance of the narrator as he brushes the sand from his trousers and disposes of the subject of his spending of the recovered fortune with the simple declaration that the money was his and he went down to Peterson's.

To Violets, $100 is a little preachment that might well be called to the attention of the Committee on Public Information. It expresses a lofty sentiment, but is relieved of its extreme goodness by the feeling that Bilby truly cares for the more humble life of which he has accidently gotten a glimpse and does not make the change from a mere sense of duty. It is very evident that the author is a man. No two women so enamoured of society, as we are led to believe that Mrs. Bilby and her daughter Meg are, would allow the mere man of the household to ship them off to a cheap suburb "in a few days." There would be a Thirty Years War first. and it is doubtful if the ladies would be waving good-bye to Bilby from the front porch after the change was consummated.

The impression gained from *On the Square* is that the author has been one of the Bohemians about whom he writes, or at least a reporter observing them, but that he is unable to reproduce the atmosphere of such a place in a manner sufficiently convincing to make his reader feel that he, too, has been there. The introduction is too long. Too many characters that are good as types, but that lead nowhere, are introduced, notably Miss Fancheon. Tony and the landlady serve to convey the impression that the author is facile with his dialect and superficially clever at delineation. Elmer Bowers is entirely unconvincing as the Russian Count; and through her faith in so obvious a poseur, one finds the little heroine also failing to measure up to the requirements. She was sufficiently sophisticated to "use" the Count to bring the other man to the point, but not enough to see through the gentleman from Snyder's Creek, Indiana. In real life, such a girl would fear the chances of disgusting her lover if she took him to a place so bizarre as the one described. The story pruned down to half its length, and cleared of superficial cleverness, would have been greatly improved.

The Rose of Sharon is a very well told story along the age old line of the influence of a little child on a hardened masculine heart. We are all familiar with the "Bucks" and the "Jeffs" of the Southern mountains who stalk each other from behind fences on the slightest provocation, and are therefore not greatly exasperated at an unplausible situation in which a lawless mountaineer demands a human life in exchange for a stolen rose bush without offering the offender the opportunity of making amends. The contrast beween the Buck who comes to kill and the Buck who rocks the baby is well done. The words, "Perhaps he would rather have killed Jeff Wilkie; but next to that he enjoyed rocking Jeff's tiny daughter," would have been sufficient to explain the two sides to the man's character without elaborating, "He was as human as that." The sentence is neither a good one nor a necessary one. Buck's preference for killing Jeff suggests that he might have done it in spite of possible disturbance of the baby, had the author not very thoughtfully caused him to rock away from his gun. The real surprise is sprung on the reader when Jeff admits that he saw Buck first, stealthily stalking the house and planning to get in the first shot. The story is concise, well told, and breathes the wild sweet air of the mountains in which the story is set. The pathos of the end is touching and beautiful.

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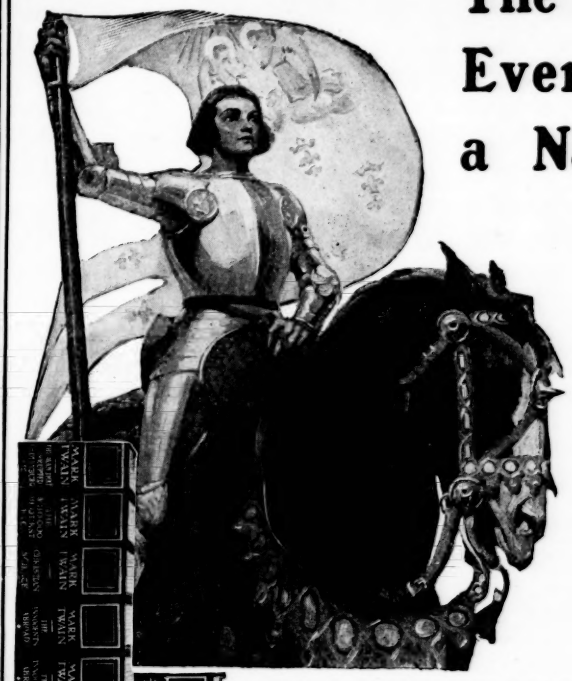

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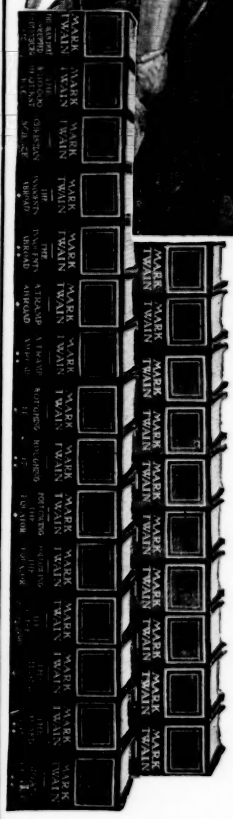

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